

# The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

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Douze événements  
qui ont marqué  
l'année 1996  
Voir page 8

## Hebron deal delayed again after rampage by Israeli soldier

HEBRON, West Bank—Israel clamped a curfew Wednesday on the center of Hebron after an Israeli soldier sprayed bullets at Arabs in a Hebron market earlier that day, wounding 11 in an attempt to sabotage the imminent handover of the West Bank town to Palestinian rule.

But after an initial noon meeting between Palestinian and Israeli officials was postponed, senior PLO and Israeli officials announced that a meeting will take place Wednesday evening between Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and chief PLO negotiator Mahmoud Abbas at the home of US ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk to try to close a deal on Hebron despite the shooting attack by an Israeli soldier in Hebron.

One Palestinian aide announced that the meeting is aimed at trying to finalize the remaining outstanding issues and to prepare for a summit meeting between President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The off-duty soldier, wearing the skullcap of a religious Jew, emptied the clip of his M-16 automatic rifle into the crowded market before other soldiers overpowered him, witnesses said. Israeli security sources identified the gunman as Noam Friedman from the Maale Adumim settlement near Jerusalem.

Netanyahu condemned the shooting in a call to Arafat and vowed to implement their peace deals, an aide to Arafat said.

On Tuesday Israeli and Palestinian negotiators said they had completed their work on an agreement for Israel's withdrawal from most of Hebron and that another meeting between Netanyahu and Arafat would meet Wednesday night at the Erez border crossing, but after an all-night budget fight in Parliament, Netanyahu said early Wednesday that a summit had yet to be scheduled.

US mediator Dennis Ross, who has shuttled between Washington and the Middle East for months to forge an agreement, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's top adviser, Ossama Baaz, are expected to oversee a signing ceremony after a Netanyahu-Arafat summit.



Israeli soldiers in Hebron: Keeping the peace?

All of the elements of a deal are on the table, but they await the final approval of the leaders of both sides, confirmed a US official familiar with the negotiations.

Just before Wednesday's attack, Israeli and Palestinian officials said they had finalized the terms for an Israeli redeployment from about 80 percent of Hebron, with the city's Jewish enclaves and the Ibrahim Mosque, a holy site to Muslims and Jews, remaining under Israeli protection.

Ross continued to meet separately with Netanyahu and Arafat on a few outstanding issues, most of them regarding further compliance with the framework Oslo peace accords.

"The agreement on Hebron has been concluded," said Abdel Razak Yahyah, a member of the Palestinian negotiating team. "The problem is what comes after Hebron. We are still discussing other outstanding issues such as further redeployments and the release of Palestinian prisoners."

One issue that still could stymie a signing, however, is the Palestinian demand that an Israeli-Palestinian mobile military unit be allowed to patrol near the Ibrahim Mosque. Israel does not want Palestinian police near the site, believed to be the burial place of the Biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Ross tried to get the two leaders to meet and initial an agreement Tuesday night. Arafat reportedly agreed, but Netanyahu was tied up in parliament to ensure that the right-wing and religious parties in his government coalition would vote for his 1997 austerity budget.

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## Electoral draft law faces legal wranglings in Parliament

By Hamdan Al Hajj  
Star Staff Writer

IN ITS meeting on Monday, the 11-member Legal Committee of the Lower House returned to the government the temporary "one-man, one-vote" electoral draft law. The Committee was split over the issue. Five members rejected the law, while another five endorsed it. But the casting vote was to IAF deputy Ibrahim Zeid Al Kilani, head of the committee, who voted to return the law to the government.

Such an action is now the talk of legislators and legal experts who are arguing that to send the draft law back to the government would imply its rejection. But that is not all, it is argued that the return of the draft law effectively means that the present Lower House is "unconstitutional" and that all its legislations and decisions are questionable.

But such an argument is complicated by the fact that the Lower House is seen as the ultimate arbiter.

Al Kilani pointed out that the Lower House can either accept, reject or amend recommendations from House committees. If committee decisions are rejected then this means that the House has automatically approved draft laws, in this case, the temporary one-man,



A difficult decision awaits the House

one-vote draft law becomes law. This is what the government wants because it would not have to resubmit a new draft law for discussion.

Nevertheless, the government is adamant. Minister of Higher Education, Dr Abdullah Ensour, who is also the deputy premier, stressed that the government insists on the adoption of the one-man, one-vote law and will defend such measure.

Despite this he agreed with Al Kilani's view that the Lower House has the authority to either accept, reject or amend the electoral law.

This stance is also given weight by Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Mohammed Al Thweib and IAF deputy Dr Basam Al Omoush.

However, Al Omoush said that the one-man, one-vote draft law is favored by the government because it was designed to reduce the size of Islamist deputies.

But even if this was the case, then the 1993 elections, carried under the single vote system, are contradictory because it failed to prevent the election of 22 opposition deputies.

Both Islamic deputies, Dr Kilani and Al Omoush, hope that the government would be more democratic and take into account the wishes of people

that the law has to be changed. They are calling on deputies to unite and reject the temporary election law and approve the Legislative Committee's decision.

Some legislators believe that if the government has to provide a new elections law during this ordinary and last session, this will lead to the possibility of extending the term of the current Lower House.

Accordingly, the period of the present House has to be extended to give the government enough time to approve a new election law in time for the new elections.

If deputies approve the committee recommendation, Ensour said the original draft law will be presented to the Upper House, which in turn will also reject it. If this happens then a joint session of both Houses would have to be convened.

The decision needs a two-third majority. If this happens, Ensour is confident that the draft law will be approved.

The situation is critical for the Lower House, as deputies have to choose between two difficult options: approve the recommendation or reject it.

In any event the end result is likely to lead to a renewed tension between the Lower House and the government.

## Israeli fair gives anti-peace front cause to unite

By Raed Al Abed  
Star Staff Writer

THE ANTI-normalization constituency in Jordan has been expanding. Despite the two-year-old peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, the relations between the two parties, at least on the popular level, remain tense to say the least. But most of all, the rise in the anti-normalization bloc has managed to stem down the activity of the pro-peace camp.

The 6 January Israeli trade fair in Amman is providing a precious opportunity for the opposition to unite the different Jordanian sectors on a united rejectionist platform.

It is the first time since peace was reached between the two countries that a consensus was reached under the slogan of "killing the Israeli industry show."

All political parties—11 opposition and eight-centrist parties excluding Al Ahd party—are unanimous in their opposition of holding the planned expo, organized by a private Jordanian company. Popular figures, labor and women unions, professional associations, deputies, the chambers of commerce and industry, and businessmen associations have all joined forces to stifle the fair.

Eversince plans for its holding were announced last November, the Israeli expo attracted massive popular anger. The protest soon spread to almost all parts in the Kingdom.

The campaign is being led by the Jordanian National Committee for the Cancellation of the Israeli Trade Fair. About 30 popular organizations are represented on the committee



Obiedat (right), Kamhawi (left) during press conference

which is headed by ex-prime minister Mr Ahmad Obiedat, a respected Jordanian public figure.

Since early last December committee members continued to meet extensively to mobilize support. The committee agreed to hold demonstrations and blacklist participants, local journalists or anyone who has anything to do with the fair. Arab political parties, who had their conference in Amman last month, also denounced the fair.

The proposed fair, which is sponsored by several Israeli government institutions, is being organized by Jordanian businessman Fakhri Al Nasser, manager of the International and National Expo Corp. In spite of mounting public protest, Al Nasser is pushing hard to convene the four-day show. Opponents of the fair

believe that Al Nasser is only a front, suggesting that there are influential Jordanian personalities who are behind the event.

"There is a bunch of ignoble politicians who are behind this exhibition," Mr Obiedat told a press conference early this week. The holding of this fair in Amman is "an impudent challenge and an insult to the feelings of the overwhelming majority of Jordanians and Arabs, not to mention the enormous damage it would have on our national economy and industry."

For its part the government is giving the popular opposition the cold shoulder. It is censoring their activities and is refusing to allow them official media coverage through TV and radio. However, the gov-

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## After a tough year, AFM head expects growth in 1997

By Itham Sadeq  
Star Staff Writer

DESPITE THE fact that the beginning of 1996 was promising for Amman Financial Market (AFM), this was not to be for long. The official index decreased from its highest 158-point level to 151-153 points at year's end. This represented a falling trend that prevailed in the market since June 1993. At that time, the official indicator was at its peak encouraged by the so-called dividends of peace and the Jordanian-Israeli treaty.

The growing setbacks in the peace process because of Israel's headline policies, particularly on the Jordanian and Palestinian tracks, left a negative influence on the AFM. Instead of moving to pump funds into the market, dealers became extremely nervous.

Undoubtedly, any negative political developments on the peace track is likely to affect the AFM. Political fluctuation turns trading on the AFM into a sort of gambling.

But analysts continue to argue otherwise. They believe that any change in dealings on the AFM is caused by internal rather than external factors.

"When the AFM index recorded its lowest levels last June at 136 points, dealers

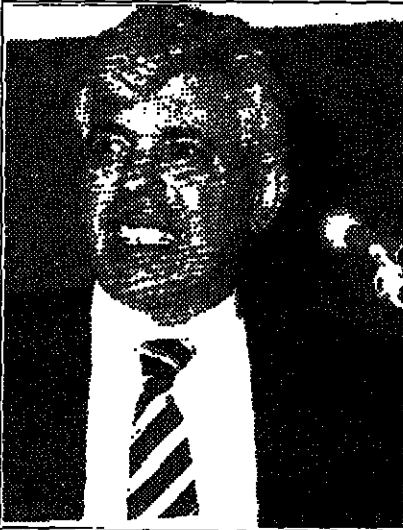
attributed this to the Central Bank of Jordan's (CBJ) policy to increase interest rates, something which led to a sharp fall in share prices.

"The AFM is sensitive to a number of internal and external factors. Some of these are economic, while others are political," the AFM Director General, Mr Wahib Al Shaer told *The Star*.

The high interest rate has a negative impact on stock prices, causing them to decline, while failure in the peace process will also affect the market.

The CBJ has the legal right to adopt what it regards as a proper policy to protect the value of the dinar. The bank has adopted a strategy to raise the interest rates to achieve such a goal. Al Shaer continued to say that the CBJ admits that this will lead to lower share prices, but it has to maintain the value of the dinar.

"Our right is to protect investors in the market, and we don't interfere in CBJ policies, this is the plurality of modern society, to have different poli-



Al Shaer

cies and objectives which function together," he added.

"The headline policy of the Israeli government under Benjamin Netanyahu has shattered all expectations to revive the economy and activate the AFM. This policy has given way to tension, uncertainty and insecurity which harm investment and trade," he stressed.

However, the AFM with-

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## Russia's famed winter footwear may be at end of the road

By Clara Germani  
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

MOSCOW—Russia launched the first man in space, achieved near universal literacy and built superpower weaponry, but the real benchmark of civilization for many here is the solution to the problem of cold feet.

Russians claim that nothing works against sub-zero temperatures like the humble valenki, the stiff, socklike felt booties resembling medieval foot-swaddling of the few Russian products that work and are in demand.

"Maybe nuclear missiles are the only thing Russia designed better than valenki," says Andrei Guermanovich, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at Moscow State University. He keeps a pair for winter walks.

But the beloved valenki could be dying out, as a long line of disappointed customers found out last week when a local factory was nearly sold out after the first snow of the season.

"If the traditional footwear dies, it won't be because there's no demand for it," says Viktor Timoshenko manager of the Horizon company, which owns three former state-owned valenki factories in Moscow.

He says it will be because in Russia's serious cash crunch, the factories can't get the credit to finance production. With interest rates of 60 percent, factories can only afford to produce valenki for immediate cash.

It's a sad state for the footwear that survived for centuries almost unchanged as an icon of Russian winter culture.

The babushka, Russia's stereotypical grandmother, wouldn't be a babushka without the clumsy gait produced by a stiff pair of valenki.

Ice fishermen, the solitary figures who dot the rural winterscapes across Russia, wouldn't stay warm long enough to hook a fish without them.

Arctic explorers, traffic cops and farmers swear by them.

A pair of cute little valenki figure in every Russian childhood, their muttony smell of warm damp wool a nostalgia trigger throughout life.

All servicemen have been taught the old art of tying insulating cloth on their feet before stepping into regulation-issue valenki.



Romancing the valenki in Russia

famous verse from a 1940s Russian love song: "Valenki, Valenki, with holes, old ones. If I fixed them I'd be able to visit my love"

The traditional felt boot has no

sole. It is a quarter-inch thickness of boiled, pounded and baked wool formed into a seamless kind of sock. A natural, heather-brown color, it is

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## Dennis Ross Brokering peace in the Middle East

By Richard B. Strass  
Special to the Los Angeles Times

WITH appointment of Madeline K. Albright, the last decade has seen four men and one woman as US secretary of state. But through Republican and Democratic administrations alike, only one person has acted as point man for arguably the most demanding and politically treacherous foreign-policy issue—the Arab-Israeli peace process. And Dennis B. Ross, 48, not only has survived, he has thrived on the job. Indeed, his influence has never been greater than it is today.



Ross

Since the November 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, through the series of attacks that left hundreds of Israelis dead and wounded, Ross has worked with Israeli and Arab leaders to make peace. In Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu's victory in Israel's May 1996 elections presented new problems. Because of the new prime minister's inexperience with and repeated skepticism toward the peace process, Ross has redoubled his efforts. This took on great urgency in September, when Netanyahu's decision to open an underground passage in the Arab section of Jerusalem sparked an orgy of violence on the West Bank and in Gaza.

While tantalizingly close to achieving agreement on the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the last remaining occupied Palestinian city, Hebron, Ross has yet to succeed. Still, he is breaking new ground as the first American to preside over Israeli-Palestinian talks.

The following conversation took place just before Ross last trip to the Middle East, in his State Department office.

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# Preserving Al Azraq Oasis, a must for biodiversity

By Manal Omar  
Star Staff Writer

LAST WEEK, a workshop was held to discuss what United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Resident Representative, Jorgen Lissner, called a miracle. This was the saving of the Azraq Oasis. In 1977, the Azraq area was declared by international standards as a "ramsar site", granting it international protection and the status of a reserve. By the end of 1993, the region was almost completely dry and the prospect for saving the oasis looked very dim.

The Azraq oasis is an environmentally significant area both nationally and internationally. It provided a freshwater habitat for an arid zone. Many exotic and threatened species in the world made their homes in Azraq. In addition, Azraq played a crucial role in the social and economic development of Jordan. In a country where water is scarce, Azraq was one of the few water surpluses in the country. The Jordanian municipalities pumped water to provide areas in Amman and Zarqa with portions of the water supply. The locals used the water to irrigate and maintain their

farms. At the same time, the exotic species serve as an attraction for tourists to Jordan.

However, the pressing need to pump water eventually led to the emergence of immense dryness in the region. The Azraq basin was being used as a primary source of water for municipal and agricultural uses at an alarming rate of 50 million cubic meters per year.

"This is twice the amount of water the basin can afford to lose," Ghaith Fariz, the project manager of the Azraq Oasis Conservation Project (AOCP) told *The Star*. "To stabilize the area, we should only be pumping approximately 25 million cubic meters per year," he added.

The conservation project was established in the beginning of 1994 when because of pumping, the Azraq oasis appeared to be drying and indeed on the verge of disappearance. The Global Environmental Facility (GIF) of the UNDP provided AOCP with a \$3 million grant. "The grant was provided so that we could rehabilitate the Azraq oasis. The situation by the end of 1993 had almost brought its death," said Fariz.

Currently, the AOCP's rehabilitation project constitutes only one-fifth of the projects they are concentrating on. In addition, research and monitoring is done for agriculture, water projects, long-term water projects, and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). This is the first time that an EIA project has been set up in Jordan. "Our main aim is to draw detailed plans for guidelines to show how we can handle natural water resources in the area. We want to use the lessons of Azraq as a precedent for future water basins," added Fariz.

AOCP has been addressing the threat of the Azraq Oasis through many different



Azraq today is a flourishing oasis after much care

channels. "One of the unique things is that we are addressing the issue from a multi-dimensional angle. We work with the Ministry of Water, Ministry of Municipalities and Environment, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), the University of Jordan, and the local population of Azraq," said Fariz. AOCP applies all forms of methods for monitoring, from the latest satellite technology to the indigenous method of finding water with a stick. The monitoring and on-location research surveys help AOCP to determine and measure the effects of their intervention. Such studies leave no doubt that the intervention was indeed phenomenal. In a two-year period, AOCP was able to bring life in an area overshadowed with death. Through reverse pumping of water back into the oasis and water harvesting, AOCP was able to maximize the amount of water rehabilitation. Today, the water supply of Azraq oasis has been replenished to a healthy level. Wildlife has gradually returned and the situation has improved. Fariz added that "Three years ago our slogan was 'save Azraq'; today our slogan is 'preserve Azraq'. The transition indicates that although they have succeeded in restoring parts of Azraq, the struggle to

preserve the biodiversity of the wetlands has just begun.

In addition to saving a part of the Azraq oasis, the AOCP has served as a catalyst for the Society for the Friends of Azraq, which was formed by the locals. "This is a responsibility for the community, Jordanian society, the government. It is a national issue. Friends of Azraq serves as a bridge between the environmental sector in Jordan and the locals," said Fariz.

Fariz proposes guidelines to the NGOs, government officials, and environmental experts in order to receive the necessary feedbacks.

The international community has recognized AOCP's outstanding efforts and labeled them as one of the success stories in the environmental struggle. Fariz emphasizes that these efforts are just a start. Only a portion of Azraq has been restored, and the threat still exists. The core of the problem, which is water pumping, should be addressed. All efforts that have been made need to be maintained. AOCP has served as a pioneer in wetland conservation as well as a new base for Jordanian water supply. Through maintaining their efforts and research this success story can produce many more miracles. ■



Azraq in 1993: A desolate dry oasis

## After a tough year, AFM head expects growth in 1997

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nessed positive developments after the government introduced a series of economic legislations. These covered the new companies law, the cancellation of capitalization tax and the new Investment Promotion Law.

"The Arab's capital share in the AFM is 32 percent. This includes governments, companies and individuals working in the banking and industrial sectors," Al Shaer said.

European investments in the AFM are estimated at 1.5 percent. In the past six months some European institutions have become active in buying and selling stocks at the market.

"This is an indication of their growing interest and I hope that their share will rise

during 1997," Al Shaer maintained.

Earlier this week, some Japanese investors showed interest in investing in the AFM. However, total dealings on the last day of 1996 were JD 248.5 million compared with JD 419 million in 1995.

The official index closed at 151 points, which is higher by 14 percent than the June closing level of 136 points, but it is still seven points below the highest figure recorded early in 1996.

However, dealings at the AFM were reactivated after the implementation of the UN oil-for-food deal. Since 10 December, the volume of trading increased between four to five times and stock prices increased by four percent to five percent, and this is expected to continue during

1997, added Al Shaer, who was also appointed a member of the Higher Ministerial Committee for Privatization.

He went on to say that Iraq remains the largest trading partner to Jordan, and it is natural to expect that the oil-for-food formula will lead to more exports of Jordanian products to Iraq.

"This is in addition to the use of the Aqaba port as the main transit point which will push the Jordanian economy and boost confidence in the market, with share prices expected to flourish and the movement of AFM enhanced."

In 1996, the AFM witnessed major developments as its management drew up a new law to be approved by the cabinet shortly. This is supposed to reinvigorate the activities of

the market, basically separating the regulatory function from the operational one.

An agreement was signed with the Paris bourse for the automation of all procedures of trading in the exchange and the creation of an electronic central depository system for settlement and clearing share trading at the market. Al Shaer continued.

"It is an ambitious project funded mainly by the French government (through a grant). We hope that it will materialize by the end of 1997," he said.

The management of the AFM has worked actively throughout last year to get the final approval of the Amman Municipality to construct its new premises. Related contracts are expected to be signed in Spring 1997 and the project is to be finished over

18 months.

Among the main objectives of the AFM in 1997 are the adoption of a code of ethics for brokers, the establishment of a unit inside the market to combat insider trading, providing courses in English language for all AFM staff members and issuing a monthly newsletter.

Also the AFM management plans to hold a conference in London, hosted by the United Bank of Switzerland (UBS), to attract more foreign investments to Jordan.

Lectures and seminars are scheduled on the 1997 agenda. These are expected to explain the nature, requirements and benefits of the publicly held companies listed on the AFM.

"Also we are willing to coordinate with other institutions in Jordan to promote the use of bonds to finance investment and cooperate with Arab exchanges for joint listing and other several stock-related activities," Al Shaer concluded. ■

## Israeli fair gives anti-peace

Continued from page 1

ment reiterated its stand. "The government is not a party in this exhibition, there is a treaty between Jordan and Israel, which is the legal reference for such issues," said Minister of Information Dr. Marwan Al Mueasher recently. He added the opposition has the right to protest the fair as long as it is within the law.

The government cannot take a neutral position on issues of national interests. A government is there to protect the national interest of the country and not take a neutral position, said Dr. Labib Kamhawi, a political commentator and the rapporteur of the committee. The only way out of this mess is for the government to cancel the fair either directly or indirectly. If they have to do it directly they have their own ways and means to kill it, otherwise the reaction of the people will be massive," he added.

"Despite the peace treaty such an idea is unacceptable, the peace treaty does not force us to deal with the Israelis as it does not prevent us from doing so," Vice President of the Amman Chamber of Industry Wasif Azzar said. "Israel wants us to buy its goods while it does not want to buy our products, and while it prevents us from exporting to Palestine."

"What kind of cooperation they are talking about?" Mr. Azzar said. "How can we cooperate when Israel is intransigent and is derailing peace talks on all tracks?"

What is interesting is that the Jordan Businessmen Association is to hold an economic conference for Arab businessmen in Amman on 6 January, the same day the Israeli expo is scheduled to open. The event will be the first Arab gathering of its kind. The conference aims at building bridges between Arab businessmen, and facilitating the movement of trade, industry and people.

The Jordanian Press Association (JPA) released a statement demanding journalists to boycott the fair. "In the light of the national consensus to reject Israeli fair, and as long as Israel continues to violate Arab rights, escalate its criminal practices against the Palestinian people and continue its aggression on south Lebanon, the JPA asks journalists to boycott the fair," a JPA statement said.

A joint statement by the committee pointed out that the Jordanian Export Development and Commercial Centers Corp. (JEDCCO), which gave the permission for the convening of

the Israeli industry fair, had side-stepped members of the board, two-third of whom are represented by the chambers of commerce and trade.

The organizers claim that they received threats warning them not to hold the fair, yet they failed to identify those behind them. While denying any involvement in such an action, the anti-Israeli fair committee said those who harm the feelings of people must expect such threats. Organizers were advised by the committee to go to court if they have evidence.

Most Jordanian businessmen said they do not object to doing business with Israel but only after a comprehensive and just peace has been achieved. They said that cooperation with Israel at this stage is premature because of its hegemony and violations that threaten the whole peace process in the region.

The business sector is still resisting pressures practiced by the government and other international economic circles to establish a regional economic council that will include the Israelis.

They also expressed fears from the active Israeli investments in the country, which will dominate the Jordanian economy in the light of the ongoing privatization process.

Members of the committee claimed that about six food and clothes factories dominated by Israeli companies are already operating in Jordan. They said that Israeli shares in these factories range from 51 to 65 percent. Most of their products are exported to Europe, the US and other countries and carry the label "Made in Israel."

In addition to these factories there are contacts going on between Israeli businessmen and unnamed Jordanian partners to create two new ventures to manufacture computers and air conditioning units.

Local economists, like Dr. Munir Hamarnah, believe that the Israeli business sector is exploiting the bad economic conditions in the country. Economic sources said that Israeli businessmen are creating funds to buy major shares in some state-owned corporations, Telecommunications Co., and others once these are offered to the public.

Mr. Obaidat asked Parliament to disclose the issue of the Israeli penetration into the strategic industries like Potash and Phosphate companies. He said he will be ready to reveal all the information related to that subject to Parliament. ■

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## Hebron deal delayed again after rampage

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The prime minister apparently wanted to have the budget in his pocket before signing a Hebron agreement, which seven of his 18 cabinet members already have said they will not support.

Netanyahu's Likud party has long opposed trading captured land for peace with the Palestinians, arguing that Eretz Israel—greater Israel—was central to Israeli security. The religious parties, in particular, do not want to give up Hebron, the second holiest city to Jews after Jerusalem. And Hebron's religious settlers adamantly oppose an Israeli redeployment.

Under the interim peace agreement that the previous Labor government signed with the Palestinians in September 1995, Hebron was to have been granted self-rule last March after six other West Bank cities were handed over to Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres delayed the redeployment after a series of suicide bombings that left 60 dead, and then lost the Israeli national elections to Netanyahu in May. The new Likud prime minister demanded changes that he said would provide better protection for the 450 Jews who live in the center of about 100,000 Palestinians. Mutual distrust and an armed clash between Palestinian police and Israeli soldiers last September bogged down the negotiations.

In the end, Netanyahu's Hebron accord is more detailed than the one in the interim agreement, but it apparently differs little in substance. Israeli officials say the accord calls for a buffer zone

around the Jewish enclaves in which Palestinian police will be restricted to carrying short-range weapons.

It establishes that a joint Israeli-Palestinian unit will patrol the high ground overlooking the Jewish neighborhoods and that Palestinians will be prevented from surrounding the Jewish areas with high buildings.

Shuhada Street, which runs from the center of Hebron past a Jewish housing complex to the Arab market next to another Jewish enclave, will be opened gradually over about four months.

A few weeks ago, Israel gave up one of its principal demands—that it be allowed to re-enter Palestinian-controlled areas if it felt such a move was necessary for security reasons. Negotiators decided this was covered by language in the existing agreements.

An American letter is to accompany the Hebron accord guaranteeing that both sides will continue to comply with the broader peace accords. The details of this letter is what remains for Netanyahu and Arafat to agree on.

The Palestinians want Israel to commit to dates for further redeployments and for a release of prisoners. They also want Israel to fulfill its promise to allow a Palestinian airport to open in the Gaza Strip and to open a road linking the Palestinian-ruled Gaza Strip and West Bank autonomous areas.

Netanyahu wants Arafat to commit to disarming terrorists, cease all Palestinian Authority activities in Jerusalem, extradite wanted prisoners to Israel and assure Israel that it has overturned all clauses in the Palestine Liberation Organization covenant. ■

Russia's  
famed  
winter  
footwear  
may be at  
end of the  
road

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worn directly on the dry snow of freezing Russian winters. "Short galoshes are often pulled on over them when slush forms because the felt is not waterproof."

Purists object to the "boot" label, insisting that "valenki" is a concept all its own. They don't consider city-style valenki produced with permanent rubber soles and selling for about \$18 to be the real thing. Rubber soles, they say, shatter at minus 22 degrees—a warm day in Siberia.

And in Russia, where all things native are treasured, now, the imports have invaded the marketplace. Russians prize valenki even for their heirloom impact.

"Valenki really saved the world during World War II," says Timoshenko.

While Germans froze to death, Russians in standard-issue valenki kept warm, he says. As a young valenki factory worker he recalls old-timers' tales of recycling used valenki that came straight from the war front.

"The sheep's biological aura affects a person's health positively," says Tatyana Skula, director of Horizon's central Moscow plant. "People who wear valenki report that arthritis, pain disappears, they have fewer colds and better blood circulation."

"The natural sheep wool is really healthy and really warm, there's no comparison with boots," says Svetlana Novosyolova, 54, a bookkeeper-turned-farmer selling her carrots in the 20-degree temperature of the Dimilovsky outdoor market last week.

She wouldn't consider standing like that in anything but her \$70 hand-made valenki, she says. Other vendors in fancy-colored synthetic imports dance around trying to keep their feet warm.

In Soviet times millions of look-alike valenki were produced to excess by state factories according to five-year economic plans.

"Our three factories used to produce 1.1 million pairs in 1990. This year we'll only produce 150,000 pairs," he says.

Most valenki production in the Soviet era was for the military. But the impoverished military has shut down as a buyer, falling back on excess stocks of valenki it was forced to buy under the Soviet economy.

Now producing for civilians only, Horizon's three plant directors are at odds with each other over how to solve their problems.

There will be a constant, if not growing, demand among civilians for valenki, they all agree. But meeting that demand is impossible without investment, and just how to attract investors is the question.

Timoshenko says Ukrainians in Canada have bought small amounts of valenki purely out of nostalgia. But he seems puzzled why he hasn't had any American interest, given the craze for LL Bean and Eddie Bauer style outdoorwear and natural fibers.

So, instead of trying to redesign the valenki, he's shifted the production of the plant he runs to blankets and natural fiber mattresses.

Two of Horizon's other factory directors both feel there is a strong demand for the basic dull and bulky valenki. But they think updated models of the valenki would attract more investors and the desperately needed cash to stay in business. ■

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## JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

It's new year, take a rest I'm taking the maid out!



### Israeli consulate in Irbid

The Israeli Foreign Ministry is studying the possibility of opening up another Israeli consulate in Irbid in reciprocation of a Jordanian consulate in Haifa. If it goes ahead this consulate would be the second in the Kingdom as an Israeli consulate in Aqaba is planned to be opened any time now. A Jordanian consulate is also being planned to open at Eilat at the same time. According to Akbar El Eshou, the staff at the Israeli Embassy in Amman is expected to increase to as many as 30 people, whereas the number of diplomats at Jordan's embassy in Tel Aviv is no more than seven.

### Fake dollars caught

The anti-drugs squad caught about 800,000 forged American dollars. The squad became suspicious when a man of an Arab origin tried to exchange \$540,000. After questioning, the man took police officers to his house where they found an extra \$260,000 that were forgeries.

### This time it is the Ministry of Water

Labour relations for the past three months have had its ups and downs culminating in the electricity workers strike. But besides that there has been more mundane day to day issues. Government workers, doctors, midwives, nurses and engineers have threatened to strike over pay, unfair allowances and increments. The latest casualty is the Minister of Water and Irrigation. About 458 workers are taking Minister Samir Qawar to court because he cancelled the "hardship allowance." The minister has taken the decision to cancel the allowance early last month, something which the employees saw as going against the law.

### Weeklies face legal action

Eight weeklies are being taken to court by the University of Jordan (UJ) for publishing news which is not accurate about the Higher Studies Club of the UJ. These are *Shihun*, *Al Bilad*, *Al Ahali*, *Al Majid*, *Al Hadath*, *Al Jamahir* and the now defunct newspaper *Al Mashreq*. The chief editors of these weeklies were being questioned by the Sweileh Prosecutor, Najeh Al Hamdan earlier last Saturday. Accompanying the editors were the President of the Jordan Press Association, Seif Al Sharif and his deputy Hilmi Al Asmar.

### JEA member held in Israeli jail

The member of the Freedom Committee in the Jordan Engineers Association (JEA), Mr Hameed Istabouli, is being held in Israeli custody in Jerusalem. He was picked up by the Mossad as he was returning to Jordan after visiting his family in the Occupied Territories last Thursday. Mr Istabouli, a member of "Committee Against Normalization with the Zionist Enemy" of the JEA is being held in the Al Maskoubieh prison in occupied Arab East Jerusalem. The Engineers Association in Amman are very angry and are appealing to all local and Arab institutions to use all forms of pressure to force the Arab authorities to set Istabouli free.

### Bread price decrease unjust, poll finds

The bread price decrease that is expected to take effect early this month is considered unjust by most Jordanians. This is according to a poll made by the Jordan Consumer Protection Society. It found that 94.4 percent of those interviewed (that's 1290 people out of 1364) said that in the light of the current decrease in international wheat prices, the government decision is still unjust. The lowering of bread means that local (pitta) bread will now be sold at 170 fils and 200 fils for French bread.

### Mazen Al Masri retracts confession

The trial of Mazen Al Masri, the man who allegedly murdered his two children, continues. Speaking for the first time under oath, Al Masri retracted his earlier confession made to police that he killed his children by giving them cyanide tablets. He said that he was forced to make this confession to protect his wife and parents. He mentioned that the police threatened that they would bring in his wife and parents for questioning. In addition to that, he said that he invented a confession, "I was weak, desperate, and distressed after being continuously questioned by authorities and I had to invent a story (to cease) the pressuring and threats," he added. He told the court that he loved his children and would do anything to protect them. Al Masri denied any knowledge of the cyanide poisoning found in his children's stomachs. Confronted with the prosecution charges that he faced marital problems and financial constraints, which he previously confessed to, Al Masri denied that too. He said that he pays fees to and that his monthly salary was JD 1000. He told the court that he even asked his wife to quit her job at the Contractor's Association and take care of the children since his salary was sufficient. The defence lawyer, Ahmed Al Najdawi is still looking for more witnesses. The trial resumes on 13 January.

### American university in Aqaba

Aqaba, the city with a touristic style, is to have an American university shortly. The Ministry of Higher Education (MHE) has agreed in principle to establish a Jordanian-American university in that part of the world. The ministry said the university must be under the supervision of the Higher Council of Science and Technology, if it is to be granted a license. Negotiations are still in progress, but it is understood that it would be a non-profit private institution, this is a further condition that is stipulated by the ministry for all the private universities that operate in the country. The secretary general of the MHE, Dr Ahmed Al Hasbani, said that the ministry has stopped granting licences for the establishment of private universities since 1992 for the establishment of the Higher Council of Science and Technology. There are already 16 applications at the ministry for the establishment of private universities, but the ministry is holding back. Another American university submitted an application to the ministry in early December to open a branch in Amman. But sources at the ministry said the application will be studied like any other by the Council.

# Publishers of daily press defend decision to hike newsstand price

By Munther Hamdan  
Star Staff Writer

THE RECENT decision of the four Jordanian dailies—*Ad Dustour*, *Al Rai*, *Al Aswaq* and *Jordan Times*—to pump up their newsstand cover price from 150 fils to 200 fils was not expected to meet with opposition—that is until the National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP) stepped in. While publishers defended their decision, which took effect on the first day of the new year, as vital to offset losses resulting from increases in the international newsprint prices, there are those who disagree. The NSCP said the hike will add additional burdens on the people, who are still reeling from the effects of general price hikes triggered by rises in fodder and bread costs.

The NSCP issued a strongly-worded statement attacking the newspaper price hikes and accusing the dailies of seeking greater profit at the expense of consumers. "We are surprised at the latest decision of the daily newspapers to raise their (newsstand) prices by 35 percent," the statement said. The NSCP rejected publishers' claims that the hike was justified to meet increases in the cost of pulp in international markets. It said the statistics it has indicate that the price of newsprint in world markets had actually went down below prices recorded two years ago. "At that time newspaper decided to increase their cover prices by 50 percent because international newsprint prices reached \$900 per ton," NSCP director Dr Muhammad Ubeidat said.

The General Manager of *Ad Dustour* newspaper, Mr Seif Al Sharif, rejected NSCP's claims that newsprint could be imported to meet the dailies' needs at a cost of \$460 per ton. He added that the reason be-

hind the increase in newspaper cover prices is economical, to offset the increase in the prices of newsprint.

Mr Al Sharif, who is also president of the Press Association, said the government's initial decision to exempt daily newspapers, all of which are public shareholding companies, from customs fees imposed on imported paper has been reversed. He explained that the 25 percent customs fees on paper have been reimposed since last July. "This led to huge losses by the newspapers," Mr Al Sharif stressed.

He said while *Ad Dustour* bought \$2 million worth of newsprint in 1996, revenues from newspaper sales reached only \$1.3 million. He said the burden of the running costs of daily newspapers, in addition to the effect of the Sales Tax have put a huge burden on the resources of daily newspapers.

However, the NSCP statement has ignored this argument, describing newspaper owners as capitalists. The statement added that the daily newspapers are making profit and that the decrease in newsprint prices will double their earnings.

The consumer society said newspapers make the bulk of their revenue from selling advertising and that the cost of paper and printing is mainly covered from advertising reve-



Reading in the street could become an increasing phenomenon after the price hike on newspapers

financial problems."

But will readers continue to buy dailies at the new price?

The price of the dailies witnessed consecutive rises since 1990 till it settled at 150 fils. "I'm sure that the demand on dailies will decrease as people now have many other choices because of the great number of weekly newspapers," said Taha Al Umoush, owner of a newspaper kiosk in Al Abdali.

He added that when the prices of dailies went up from 100 fils to 150 fils per copy people continued to buy them, because at that time there were only a few weeklies around.

Talab said the decision may have its advantage as well. "The weekly newspapers must now seize the opportunity to attract more readers who will find in one newspaper everything they want to know during the week other than the daily reports which are aired through other means like TV and radio."

Raja Talab, chief editor of *Shihun* weekly, said that it is unfair to impose customs duty on newsprint. He expected the new price hikes to pressure the weeklies which "already face

# Ross: Brokering peace in the Middle East

Continued from page 1  
Excerpts follow:

How have you seen your role evolving since you became special Middle East coordinator?

Over the past four years, the task has been an extremely demanding one, because we expanded our efforts beyond just talks between Israelis and Palestinians. Every negotiation ended up creating multiple committees, and overseeing became something that was exceedingly demanding. And when you add the various crises and problems we had to cope with, it was something that has been unremitting.

Has your role changed dramatically since the new government took over in Israel?

I guess I would say the following: There were clearly periods, even during the previous government's time, when I was as intensely involved, but not always out there, and certainly never for an extended period of time. This is new. Now that happened, first, because you had an unprecedented crisis because of the explosion of September. It was qualitatively different from anything we had ever seen.

And, secondly, because it is a different government that hadn't really yet established a working relationship with the Palestinians. We needed to play more of a role in helping bring them together. ... But, remember, there were times before the Israeli and Palestinian had developed a working relationship ... in 1994, for example, when there weren't direct negotiations and I actually flew to Tunis on successive Mondays and brought the Israelis with us.

In October, you were on your way to the airport to leave for Washington when Prime Minister Netanyahu asked you to return.

Actually, it was a phone call I had initiated. We spoke about what had happened (in the talks), and we suddenly made progress. So it was within that context that he essentially decided that I wouldn't go. But also because, at the same time, I got a call from the Palestinians asking me not to go.

There were two conversations en route to the airport where we essentially made a collective decision: All right, I won't go.

Now, in a sense, what was

different was you never had us playing the role of my shuttling back and forth between the leaders. That had not happened before. ...

But many times from 1992 on, I would be on the phone every day to both sides; and I can't tell you how often I was asked to call the chairman (Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat) by the Israeli side. During a certain period, Shimon Peres would give me a call about 5 in the morning, his time, and every day he would ask me if I could call the chairman.

So there was an intervention. But when it's done over the telephone, it's not as visible as when I'm out there.

How would you describe the state of your relationship with the Netanyahu government, considering the widespread perception that the administration preferred the election of Shimon Peres?

No, I, the most important thing from our standpoint is to have a good working relationship with the Israeli government, not only because our countries' relationship is so deeply rooted in history and shared values, but also because if we're going to make headway on peace, having that kind of relationship is essential. That we had a close relationship with the previous government should come as no surprise. I think it's because there was a great deal of progress we made during those years, and it was made by working closely together.

From the very beginning of this government, we made it clear that we wanted to work closely with them, because we realized a partnership is the key to being able to move ahead.

Do you believe you have been moving ahead with this government?

We obviously haven't been making the kind of headway we would like to see. But I would ascribe it more to the fact that this has been a period of time when the two sides have had to get to know each other.

I think it's important to remember that even with the last Israeli government, when they developed a relationship of trust and confidence with their Palestinian counterparts, it wasn't instant. It took time and the two of them working through difficult problems before they got to the point where

they developed a kind of mutual confidence.

But don't you agree that a lot of Arabs and others, not just Palestinians, are no longer prepared to believe that the Netanyahu government will live up to its pledge to carry on with the peace process?

I would say there's no question that those in the region are not yet convinced that this government is prepared to live up to the commitment.

But I believe that Prime Minister Netanyahu is serious about pursuing peace. We take him seriously. He has engaged in serious negotiations. But I'll also be the first to admit that what matters is not what he says, but what he does.

And you think Prime Minister Netanyahu will do the right thing?

Let me put it this way. We know this is a prime minister determined to be successful. And I believe he will make every effort to be successful.

If that's the case, why is it so difficult to finish the deal on Hebron?

I think any negotiating process always becomes more complicated as you come to the end of it. Issues that, on their own, wouldn't be seen as being significant or particularly profound take on greater weight because that's what separates you from concluding a deal.

And I think each side recognizes that it will be the first agreement between this government and the Palestinian Authority, and therefore it gets invested with greater urgency.

Second, each side is dealing not only with Hebron but also looking at how you create a road map for the future between the two. Inevitably that means that even issues that don't seem particularly profound become part of a greater goal.

But once the deal is made, it will represent an important threshold, and it will have a psychological impact, because it will be the first real deal that the two have worked out themselves.

Obviously, you remain upbeat. How do you account for this?

Look, we have dealt with a process that, since 1993, has endured a series of shocks, traumas and challenges. It has endured because it responds to something fundamental. The peoples on both sides do not

see an acceptable alternative.

Did you know that Bibi's (Netanyahu's) first impulse after the explosion in September was to call Arafat?

We will continue to have ups and downs. Because this is a difficult conflict to resolve. Nonetheless, the fundamentals are there and it's what makes it possible to endure in the face of great challenges, but it also makes it possible to succeed and overcome the challenges.

What about the other part of the peace process, between Israel and Syria: Is it dead or just dormant? I assume it's more difficult, given the harder line coming from this Israeli government.

Well, the only thing I can say in response to that is that both sides have made it clear to us that they would like to resume the negotiations. ...

Do you find it more difficult dealing with Syria, given new evidence of its involvement in terrorism? Even the Saudis seem to be pointing at them for some responsibility in the attack on the US base in Saudi Arabia last June.

The Syrians have been on our terrorist list, and this is an issue on which there have been continuing discussions with them, and it's obviously an issue where there's a real difference with them.

At the same time, what separates them from others has been a willingness to negotiate a peace agreement directly with the Israelis. So long as the Israelis want to have such talks, so long as the Syrians remain committed to such talks, then we will try to work with the Syrians. ...

What about America's other friends in the area? Are you concerned that countries like Jordan are out on a limb, having been encouraged to make peace with Israel?

There is no doubt that the environment out there can be characterized by a decline in trust. Between Israel and all its neighbors. And while we know that negotiations have a substantive content, there is also a psychological content or dimension.

So when you see a decline in trust, a souring environment, it has an impact. Therefore, you must find ways to restore trust. And we're trying. ■

## Point of order

By Raed Al Abed

### States are not ruled by emotions!

Hadeeth Al Nassr (People's talk) is a popular social program on the Arabic Channel One TV. Last week's zoom was on the tragedy of Jordanian women married in this country to foreigners or Arab nationals. They suffer from legislations that bar them from including their children in their passports and have their citizenship rights just like any Jordanian member.

The program was full of tragic true to life stories. One mother had to apply for a visa for her husband and children to come and visit her. They hold an Egyptian travel document for Palestinian refugees.

She used to receive them in Amman as visitors for a couple of weeks but the visit sometimes depended on the mood of the official who signed the permission.

"I am here in Amman, my husband and children are in an Arab country, they visit me for one month every year, just like guests. I am not allowed to include them in my passport. It is also hard for me to go to that Arab country for visa obstacles," the crying mother told the program. She has four children and their ages range from four till 13 years old.

Another case was that of a Jordanian woman who is married to a Turkish citizen who had been living in this country for the past 30 years.

While the law allows those who stay in this country for 15 years the right to Jordanian nationality, there is one snag. Their kind of work should not be listed among those occupations which can be done by Jordanians! These are just some of the tragedies.

One of the guests of the program was an official from the Passport Dept. He shocked viewers when he said that "states are not ruled by emotions." After all what he heard, it seems that authorities do not give any considerations to the human aspect of the issue. We agree that states should not be ruled by emotions, but laws should be progressive to reflect the social interests of societies that include bringing families together and not dividing them.

There must be a set of procedures that are strictly followed, after all, we live in a state of law. Most states in the world have a general policy not to divide families. But more so, we have our own heritage. The Islamic teachings have always nurtured family values and the respect for human rights.

### Digging up the road

The "excavations" that are going on in some areas in Amman for the sake of renewing our tattered water network, is a project that we appreciate and support. But there does not seem to be any safety procedures for carrying out such works.

With no warning signs, pedestrians and most of all cars are suddenly confronted with road works and road blocks.

In some lucky areas however, there are red and white tapes wrapped around slabs of stone that are chipped at the corners. But in areas like east Amman, the authorities do not even bother to put any sort of marks, leaving patches of earth uncovered for weeks on end.

This inevitably turns into chaos as patches become soggy either because of rainfall or more likely because of shoddy workmanship that leaves water pipes flowing into the street.

But you also have to feel sorry for the workers. At a pitance wage, they are forced to work with no protective clothing such as ear covers, gloves, and certainly not enough rest. The workers' hard lack becomes more pitiful if it rains; you can forget about plastic coats.

These are not luxuries but are basic safety procedures that must be followed and should be provided by the municipality. Further, they cost peanuts. According to our information these are usually gifts from Western countries.

Something must be done, roads are dug up and left for ages. Only the other day a road in Al Abdali was dug up, asphalted and had to be dug up yet again one week later, just because some engineer or worker forgot to do his work properly. This has got to stop. It's no use turning a blind eye.

## JORDAN TODAY

TOURISM • CULTURE • ENTERTAINMENT

JANUARY 1997

### The Rituals of Ramadan

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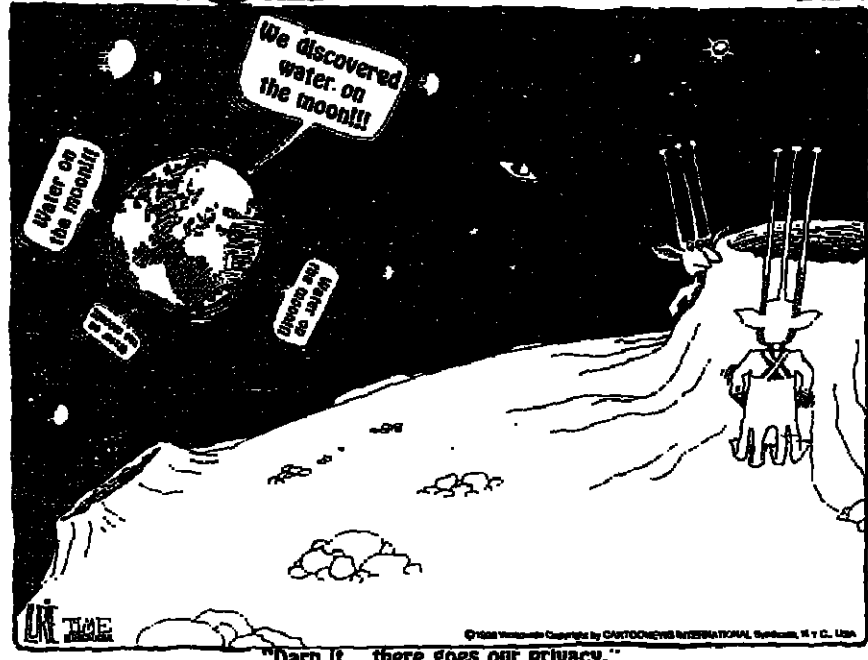
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## LURIE'S WORLD



## Our Say...

## The problem with the Hebron deal

THE HEBRON deal is delayed again—this time after an Israeli soldier opened fire at Arabs in a busy produce market wounding at least 11 people. The aim of the ultra-religious soldier was to derail possible agreement on Israeli deployment in the city and its surroundings. He is a hero for over 400 Jewish fanatics who reside in the old quarter of the city and whose fate and security prevented a scheduled troop withdrawal from the city so far.

Wednesday's incident is not unique. It is one of many similar incidents where Jewish extremism was able to force its own agenda on the peace process. It remains today the single most dangerous element preventing a smooth implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli self-rule deal leading to a final settlement.

Jewish fanaticism is not a new phenomenon in Israeli society. But in recent years it has emerged as a power to be reckoned with inside the Israeli establishment. There is no doubt that unless it is reigned, the prospects of a just and lasting resolution to Israel's occupation of Arab lands remain bleak.

It is Jewish extremism that brought to the helm a right-wing government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, which now is the main obstacle to a peaceful settlement based on the trading of land for peace as agreed upon in the Madrid conference six years ago.

The scene of a bunch of bearded young men going on the rampage in the streets of Hebron, occupying Arab houses and harassing Palestinians is a grim reminder that the prospects of peaceful coexistence between the two people are growing less likely every day.

We know that those fanatics do represent the bulk of the Israeli society and we know that if these destructive elements continue to be given a free hand in colonizing Arab lands, they will bring the entire peace process tumbling down. And just as these overzealous and politically motivated groups are gaining influence in Israeli politics, they are giving every excuse to extremists on Arab and Palestinian sides to gain ground. In the end, and if this wave of extremism continues to expand unchecked, extremists will take control of the political process at the expense of the silent majority that apparently opts for a peaceful settlement.

That's why the 400 or so settlers in Hebron must be removed from the Palestinian city if the peace process is to continue safely. Menachem Begin made an historic, albeit unpopular, decision back in 1979 to evict the Israeli settlement of Yamit in the Sinai. That decision contributed to the stability of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel until today.

There could be no peace if extremists, on both sides, continue to call the shots and force their will on politicians and negotiators. The 400 Jewish fanatics in Hebron will be used, just as they are being used now, to destabilize and shake the fragile peace that exists today between Palestinians and Israelis. Peaceful coexistence cannot be forced, but has to come as a natural fruit of a just, comprehensive and lasting peaceful settlement. In that sense Israel's illegal settlements in the West Bank and Gaza must also be removed along the way. ■

## A view from America

## Old friend, new perspective

By Carrie Nelle Moya  
Star US Correspondent

IN THE last month of 1996, the United States has to come to realize that Turkey, a traditional ally since World War II, has become more prominent, playing a decidedly significant role in realigning the balance of power in the all-critical Middle East. This is of great importance not just to the United States and the West, but also to the newly independent Islamic republics that were part of the former Soviet Union.

In December, Turkey's new Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan of the Welfare Party, established relations with Iran, posing a formidable challenge to US foreign policy. This sign of what is to come should have been expected when seen in the light of his election.

To understand this development, one must understand 20th century Turkish history, especially the socio-economic conditions which produced Erbakan, a most astute politician and strategist in the 1990s. Erbakan was seen by most of the westernized elite in Turkey and by a majority in the West as unsuitable to hold the reins of the self-proclaimed "secular republic" seeking to join the European Union.

Indeed, until recently, he was decried by Turkish elitists and the military establishment as unfit to govern because of his Islamic dedication and his seemingly aversion toward "westernizing" Turkey.

The inability of the Westernized secular factions like Tansu Ciller's Motherland and Mesut Yilmaz's Straight Road parties to form a viable coalition forced the Republican President, Suleyman Demirel, to ask Erbakan to form a government. As Ciller was Prime Minister when the recent elections were held but her party finished third, Yilmaz succeeded her as PM in a fragile coalition of their two factions, with Ciller's becoming Deputy and Foreign Minister. To the dismay of secularists and the military, the coalition collapsed shortly afterwards.

The remaining options were to have Erbakan form a government or hold new elections, but secularists and the military feared this would give Erbakan's Welfare an absolute majority in Parliament, enabling him to rule alone and pass any legislation in conformity with his Islamic ideology. Considering the latter to be the greater evil, Ciller and Yilmaz turned to Erbakan to form a government; he succeeded, with the result being the present Turkish regime, with Ciller now being the Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister.

If this coalition holds, Turkey will have succeeded in having a stable government for the first time since the political defeat of Turgut Ozal in 1991, a secularist and

staunch friend of America.

Why so important? Turkey holds an exceedingly strategic geographic and economic position between the Middle East, Europe and Asia. Since the late 1940s, Turkey provided the US with military and intelligence bases to confront the communist bloc. Turkey was and is a cornerstone in the global strategic planning of NATO. It played a vital role in Desert Storm and continues to provide bases for the US and allied forces monitoring northern Iraq.

Turkey was the first country to respond to President Bush's (and subsequently the UN's) request to impose sanctions against Iraq in August 1990 after the Kuwaiti invasion. Turkey closed Iraq's vital oil pipelines to the Mediterranean and stopped all trade with Iraq, at a staggering loss of about three-to-four billion dollars a year.

After joining the Western (US) strategy of isolation under Ozal, Demirel, Ciller and Yilmaz, Turkey placed tremendous pressure on Syria. The promised compensation for the West for the Turks' losses never materialized. And under subsequent mounting economic

hardships there was a growing enmity with all neighbors (Iran, Iraq, Armenia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Syria) because of Turkey's extremely pro-Western attitude. The largest segment of its conservative Muslim population became increasingly disappointed and angered at the secular parties governing Turkey, until the advent of Erbakan.

Added to these problems were the Kurdish insurgency in the southeastern part of the country, soaring inflation and unemployment. The final grievance was the military's accord with Israel signed by the Ciller/Yilmaz coalition, which the majority of people saw as siding against sister Islamic nations. They considered Israel as the usurper of Jerusalem, the third holiest city of Islam, and the persecutor of fellow Muslims in Lebanon and Palestine.

Amidst this frustration, the Welfare party under Erbakan assumed power on a simple and popular platform: Restoration of Islamic values but with modernization; reconcile differences with neighboring countries in a spirit of goodwill; placing Turkey's interests above but not necessarily in lieu of those of the US, Europe and NATO; end the war with the Kurds on mutual respect and Islamic tolerance; repatriate the displaced Kurds to their villages and help them rebuild homes and lives; reinvigorate the economy by creating jobs and increasing salaries by an average of 50 percent; restoring national honor and international respect for Turkey.

Erbakan no longer has to beg for membership in the European Community, a goal which was rejected for over 20 years (despite the acceptance of three less strategic but "Christian" countries: Greece, Spain and Portugal, an act that had deeply humiliated the majority of Turks, including the "Westernized elite" who continue to consider Turkey a "European democracy" rather than a Levantine Third World country).

Today the US et al. have no choice but to deal with this traditional strategic ally on a more equal basis (versus master-and-servant). The situation is delicate: the potential is enormous. We do have allies remaining in Turkey. When Erbakan allowed Iranian President Rafsanjani into Turkey last month, he wanted the Iranian delegation to visit Turkish military installations, but the old guard military would have no part of it. Rafsanjani's daughter charged the Turkish women were reminiscent of pre-Khomeini Iran—most definitely not meant to be a compliment but a charge that infuriated the long-Westernized/liberalized women of the Turkish educated class.

It will demand astute diplomacy on the part of all Western governments to retain Turkey as an ally. Should the West be able to do so, chances of true peace in the Middle East once again could emerge and, conceivably, place Israel and its neighbors back on the road for which Vitzthak Rabin gave his life. ■



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Turkish Pro-Islamic "Welfare Party" Leader NECMETTIN ERBAKAN

## The Frenchman from Brussels

## EU Mideast mediator team parachutes into the flap

By Samir W. Raafat

CHRISTOPHE FARNAUD, 31, who besides being the tallest member of the French Embassy (2.02m) in Egypt was also its rising star. Much earlier than expected he's been yanked out of his often overbearing beat in Cairo only to be plunged head first into an equally if not more headache-prone posting.

According to diplomatic sources Farnaud is a senior member of the EU special Middle East peace team. And we all know what this means: Catching up on a century-old dossier which could easily account for the depletion of an entire rain forest in terms of paper. Working the phones at three o'clock in the morning. Plus the consumption of endless coffee and tea in Damascus, Beirut, Jerusalem, Gaza and the Arab League. These are but some of the more benign impediments ahead.

Newly established, the Brussels-based team *de novo* is headed by senior Miguel Angel Moratinos, the Spanish ambassador to Israel. Moratinos was previously Spain's Foreign Ministry director general for Middle East and African Affairs.

This move is part of a belated European effort in asserting itself as a major player in our region. To date, the Middle East Peace Show was run entirely by the American State Department's troubleshooting brigade headed by Dennis Ross.

Dennis B. Ross's involvement with the Middle East precedes the Madrid conference. In 1989 he was a Middle East staffer on the National Security Council and senior adviser to president-elect George Bush during his campaign. Later he was appointed US State Department policy planning director under Secretary of State James Baker.

While Israel tolerated and sometimes welcomed the mediation of the Americans, it was initially ill-disposed towards the new arrivals. In his related

statements on the eve of French President Jacques Chirac's October visit to Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas, Israel's Foreign Minister David Levy sharply criticized the Paris-backed idea of the European Union naming a Middle East peace coordinator. "We reject it completely," he told Israeli Radio. "The two sides (Israeli and Arab) must reach an agreement among themselves. Any other method is the antithesis of negotiations free from outside pressure."

Translated into everyday language this could mean several things. After the courtesies are over and done with, the EU mediators will be discouraged from sipping "Turkish" coffee and nibbling sweet pastries at East Jerusalem's Orient House. They will be treated as second fiddle in Tel Aviv and portrayed as self-serving friends of the neighboring Arab regimes. The Likudnik spoilers will invariably stir things in Washington to the disadvantage of the Europeans. In Bonn or Berlin, Zion & Co. will empower the allegedly pro-Israeli Kinkel (Dr. Wolfgang Kohler, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3.12.96.) against his more moderate European counterparts thus complicating the already entangled process even more.

Naturally, there will be comparable quibbling and frustrating pussyfooting from the Arab side as well. Ah! what a deadlock... Mon Dieu, what an impasse.

Unfortunately for the EU mediators their mission starts right in the middle of The Flap. An odd period where the Middle East is neither in a situation of real peace and neither is it in a state of war, a predicament with which both sides of the divide felt comfortable and familiar with for three decades. It is a vague period where most of the nations in this area are in a state of self-perpetuating unrest. But Farnaud and his new boss have been around long enough to conjecture what to expect. They understand that since the 1991 Madrid Confer-

ence, which celebrated its 5th anniversary in November, the peace process suffered major hiccups and peace process indignities.

Speaking of indignities, Maratinos & Co. should also know that even though to the West "Halal" and "Kosher" may seem similar in concept, you cannot abide by Thomas Friedman's tongue in cheek hypothesis that no two countries that both have a McDonalds have ever fought a war against each other which is precisely why it is important that Syria starts selling Big Macs post haste. The six million dollar question: Are the burger-crazy Europeans simply going to replicate the American effort, or do they have a surrogate and

more imaginative approach in mind?

On our part we must realize that the EU team joins/ complements Ross Inc. at a time when relations between the Jewish state and its Arab neighbors are at their lowest since the euphoric 1994 MENA-I summit of Casablanca. And with European foreign policy makers only slightly more united than they were 50 years ago, it would be unwise for anyone to hold their breath for any miracle soon.

With these words of "encouragement" all that is left is for us to wish Christophe "merde". He'll most certainly need it! ■

EGYPTIAN GAZETTE



© 1998 Cartoonists by CARTOONISTS INTERNATIONAL, Inc., N.Y.C., U.S.A.  
"Hope you brought your own food, Easter!"

## Middle East Beat

by Khairi Janbe

## Happy New Year

HAPPINESS MIGHT as well be a state of mind at next year, unless we decide to deal with objective reality as something independent of our consciousness. Therefore, happy new year to plenty of history and very little geography, happy new year to eagles confined, to the comfort of the south, and to the esteem of the north.

The land of challenges can only strive on challenges, and the road ahead is certainly full of them. West Asia looks eastward to meet East Asia, and the Near Eastern rim of Egypt looks across the Mediterranean towards the European rim of the Near East.

Complementarity on the one hand in geographical terms, meets supplementarity in human terms on the other. The addition of geography to the human element constitutes the essential ingredients of an identity. To work for it is an arduous task, and to be a pioneer has no connection to the size of a country nor to the determinants of popular census.

The matter is clearly that of a vision, and we have no shortage of visionaries. To move ahead, is to break the straight jackets we have created for ourselves and to spread our vision is to release the wings that have been strapped to the shackles of a merciless history and savage circumstances. The struggle of beasts leave a bloody and muddy trace after the footsteps of the civilizational march, while the struggle of the noble, elevates the spirit of the civilizational pursuit, for it builds and reinforces the image of the self, and constructs correctly the image of the other.

Traditions are moulds that have been created for practical reasons and imaginary aspirations. They are man-made and consequently man-changed. History is an ipso facto past, nevertheless, most of the time it is a bunk, and when need be must be debunked. We must not condemn our country and its role in the civilizational progress towards the next millennium, to the imperatives of history, which are not applicable anymore, and to traditional roles that can be more of a handicap than feathers in our cap. Alas, there is no virtue in suffering, for this is the pursuit of saints and not the domain of lesser mortals. Poverty does not only deprive, but also depraves and the quick march towards the 21st century must be carried out even if there will be plenty of kicking and screaming.

We have been free so long as circumstantial evidence allows, and being circumstances by our circumstances, our country had forgotten the existence of freedom in the absolute, otherwise, to what measure can relative freedom be put to the test? Our thoughts have been limited to the reality of freedom as allowed by our country's peculiar circumstances and that hampered only our role in the region and stopped us aspiring to our rightful place. We, as Jordanians, have inherited the legacy of the Arab renaissance, and the Kingdom of millions of Arabs. It is a legacy to carry with pride and fulfill with diligence. Our will has always been put to the test by the countless doubters and cynics, who have presented our legacy, as a heavy cross to bear. Yet, the national spirit is linked irrevocably, to Jordan's present which is, the natural progression of its own past.

The inter-changeable parts are not historical lockers that have alienated us from our identity and our task. The common man must remain the cornerstone of our objectives. Whichever it is in it. ■

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كلنا من العرب



## Business scene

■ The National Commercial Centers is to reduce its JD 5 million paid-up capital to JD 3 million. This step has been taken to cover the accumulating losses expected by the end of this fiscal year. The share volume was cut by 40%. On the other hand, the working capital of the company was increased from JD 3 million to become JD 6 million. This rise will be covered through private subscription.

■ The total assets of operating banks in Palestine reached \$2 billion, generating a growth of 45%, says Dr. Fawad Bseis, the governor of the Palestinian Monetary Authority. Deposits in these banks were \$1.634 billion until last October, a rise of 41% compared to 1995. Credit facilities have recorded a growth of 49% over the first nine months of 1996.

■ The World Bank has approved a study to finance a free zone in Aqaba, expecting that such a step will lead to increasing Jordanian exports. A report regarding this study was sent from the World Bank to the Ministries of Trade and Industry and of Finance and the Free Zones Corp. The report's suggestions aim at improving the competence of free zones in Jordan in customs and infrastructure. There are other studies concerning the establishment of joint free zones in Jordan by Japan, ESCWA, the World Bank, and the Palestinian National Authority.

■ The share of private sector in total investments is expected to rise from 61% in 1993 to 67% by 1997, according to estimates by the Investment Promotion Corp. The volume of total investments is JD 5242 million between 1993 to 1997, of which the public sector has a stake of 35.8% and the private sector 64%. Enhanced by the new Investment Encouragement Law, the volume of investment is expected to rise to JD 381 million during 1996. This doesn't include big investment projects that are to be executed in 1997, particularly the hotels on the Dead Sea coast.

■ Jordanian, Saudi and Palestinian investors have recently bought the government stake in the Jordan Hotels and Tourism Co., which is the owner of Jordan InterContinental Hotel. This deal was reached at JD 12.47 million, and led to a rise in the average of daily transactions among dealers in the Amman Financial Market to JD 21,000. The government sold all its shares in the Jordan Hotels and Tourism Co., in the light of its tendency towards privatizing institutions of the public sector.

# Jordan gets set to receive most from oil for food deal

By Ilham Sadeq  
Star Staff Writer

A LIGHT at the end of the tunnel? Well maybe, Iraq started to pump its crude oil to Turkish ports two weeks ago.

Since the oil-for-food deal began to be implemented on 10 December, Iraq has gained growing importance in the world.

Jordan will be one of the main countries to benefit. Commercial ties between the two countries strengthened since the early 1980s. These became strategic as the Aqaba port became one of the main venues to handle Iraqi two-way traffic.

However, the Jordanian

market suffered a major setback as result of the Gulf War and UN sanctions imposed on Iraq. These losses were mostly in land transit and the Aqaba port.

Since early December, Jordanian officials, companies and businessmen have been holding intensive talks with their Iraqi counterparts to conclude contracts and export commodities allowed by the oil-for-food deal.

Sources at the Amman Chamber of Industry revealed that Jordanian companies have won tenders to provide Iraq with food exports, detergents and vegetable oils to the tune of \$80 million.

"There are 20 Jordanian

companies who have won these tenders," Mr. Ali Al Dajani, a researcher at the Chamber of Commerce, told *The Star*. He added that this is due to the high quality, competitive prices, delivery and global specifications provided by such companies "despite the heated competition from Arab and foreign manufacturers."

But this is only the first step. "There are other pending offers related to pharmaceuticals. We hope after getting these tenders, that Jordanian products will increase to \$110 million," Al Dajani added.

During the six-year embargo, Jordanian pharmaceuticals established a strong hold in Iraq because of their high qual-

ity and competitive price.

"We are waiting for confirmation and Letters of Credit that have to be opened in Paris and New York, before starting to export products to Iraq," said Al Dajani. The Jordanian Chamber of Industry hopes that these LC's can be established through local banks which are sound, modern and closer to Iraq, he continued.

The implementation of the oil-for-food deal also has its effect on the Amman Financial Market.

"In line with the oil-for-food deal, I hope that an improvement in prices will be maintained, Mr. Wahib Al Shaer, director general of AFM, told *The Star*.

He pointed out that since it was announced early last month until Sunday 29 December the trading volume on the AFM increased between four to five times and the share prices have gone up by between four and five percent, and this will continue till the beginning of 1997, he added.

The Aqaba port is expected to be the most prominent outlet for Iraqi imports, because of its size and past experience.

However, Aqaba is already facing strong competition from Dubai which has customs-free port that is well equipped.

The Dubai harbor is also very close to Iraq, has large storehouses and is capable of fast delivery.

Many Iraqi merchants have recently arrived at Dubai to import foodstuff items from the Emirate having concluded contracts for rice, tea, sugar, wheat soya bean and pharmaceuticals.

However, observers argue that the most to benefit will be Turkey. There is a pipeline between the two countries pumping oil at a daily average of 800,000 barrels have already started.

Before the embargo 308 million barrels of Iraqi crude used to go through the pipeline.

All this means that the commercial relations between the two countries will be activated to hit \$2 billion figure.

Potas, a Turkish company that owns part of the pipeline, gets \$45 million for carrying the Iraqi crude annually.

Iraqi sources said earlier that the number of Turkish trucks transporting foodstuff items to Iraq tripled to reach 1000 a day.

## Iraq could lead a new era of stability in 1997

AMMAN (Star)—With its new flexibility, Baghdad now seeks to lift the economic sanctions imposed on it by the United Nations since Iraq's ill-fated invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Some analysts are optimistic that there will be a breakthrough by early 1997, others say that such a development is unlikely until mid-1997.

However, the next few months are likely to witness an intensive dialogue between Baghdad and Washington, as the latter is more convinced that Iraq is becoming more flexible and willing to co-operate with the US demands.

Since the oil-for-food deal was signed last May, Iraq proved more lenient and co-operative with the UN and sought to implement this memorandum of understanding. Despite this, the US foot dragged, it took the US till 10 December to agree on a framework to implement the formula.

Contacts between Jordanian and Iraqi officials also intensified.

A Jordanian ministerial delegation headed by the Minister of Finance Marwan Awad and Minister of Energy Hashem Al Dabbas visited Iraq early this week. They are discussing with their Iraqi counterparts issues of common interest and means of increasing oil imports from Iraq during 1997. Jordan imports 4.5 million tons of oil from Iraq annually. This is estimated at \$200 million. Dr Dabbas said that they are buying 4.4 mil-

lion tons of crude and processed oil in 1997 with a daily average of 75,000 barrels a day. 50,000 are sold to Jordan on spot prices, while the remainder is sold at preferential prices.

This is to be followed by another meeting of the Jordanian-Iraqi Joint Committee in Baghdad on 6 January to discuss the trade protocol between the two countries.

But today, Baghdad is witnessing a hype of activity. Iraqi markets and hotels, such as Al Rashed, are the center for Arab and foreign representatives from industrial and petroleum sectors who wish to clinch a deal in the hungry Iraqi market.

Under the deal Iraq is allowed to export \$2 billion worth of oil every six months in return for foodstuff items and pharmaceuticals. As soon as the oil flowed in Iraqi pipelines, the price of commodities recorded was halved.

Iraqi merchants raced to get rid of their commodities and prepare themselves for the new shipments.

A huge number of foreign oil companies flocked to Baghdad to conclude large deals and contacts to import Iraqi oil. These included the French Elf Aquitaine, Japanese Mitsubishi, the giant US Caltex (a joint venture between Texaco and Chevron) and Texaco.

The value of the Iraqi dinar also revived after the first oil shipment was exported through Turkish ports. It has be-

come about 700 dinars per dollar compared to 2000 before.

Generally speaking, Iraq is leading a new era towards economic development and construction, turning over the ever worst six years of sufferings and blockade.

There are noticeable political and economic developments being approved by the Iraqi government. Observers expect the government to embark on changes including the further exploitation of its national resources during the phase of reconstruction.

The industrial and agricultural sectors are given more concern, as the Iraqi cabinet recently approved a plan to irrigate 476,000 dunums in southern Iraq. An Iraqi senior official earlier said that "during the six years of embargo, we were able to concentrate on enhancing the agricultural sector and achieve self-sufficiency."

Iraq aims at maintaining this by cultivating strategic crops such as grains, particularly wheat in addition to improving its livestock.

On the external level, there is an enormous change in Baghdad's relations with Arab countries, namely, Egypt and Jordan. Some analysts argue that Jordanian-Iraqi relations are witnessing a turning point that is marked by intensive official contacts aimed at strengthening co-operation and restoring Iraq role in the region.

# Hayat Zaman, a new hotel owned by JTIC

AMMAN (Star)—An Agreement was signed last Sunday at Al Baydar hall, in Kan Zaman Touristic Village at Al Yadoudah, to construct and restore the Al Nawafiah Touristic Village in Wadi Mousa.

It was concluded by the Chairman of the Jordan Touristic Investment Co., (JTIC) Mr. Ali Ghandour with the presence of his deputy Mr. Said Abu Jaber and the company's General Director, Mr. Saleem Maron, and from the executing company, Mr. Samir Hassan Al Tabba'a.

The new project is named (Hayat Zaman) Hotel and Resort (five stars). JTIC

owns flourishing touristic projects like Taibet Zaman Hotel and Resort at Southern Taibet/ Wadi Mousa, Kan Zaman Touristic village in Al Yadoudah, and the Kan Zaman/ Karak which is still under construction.

Al Nawafiah village is situated on the right side of the Wadi Mousa's entrance, overlooking Petra. It lies in an area covering 32 dunums alongside the valley, only two kilometers from Petra.

It is surrounded with trees, and in the center there are marvelous ancient buildings that were once inhabited by Al Nawafiah, the most well-known tribe in Wadi Mousa.



Al Tabba'a (left) and Ghandour

The total costs of the project are JD 6 million and would be completed in 18 months.

This restoration of the village is aimed at reviving the heritage of Jordan and restoring the beautiful countryside within the context of presenting a mixture between past civilizations and the present.

JTIC seeks to convert this village into a distinguished touristic center, through training and qualifying local cadres in the field of touristic and hotel careers.

Al Nawafiah (Hayat Zaman) involves buildings of 13000 square metres in addition to a restoration of 104 old houses divided into groups comprising widespread green areas. The project also includes a swimming pool, a large garden, a restaurant, halls for meetings and celebrations besides other facilities and shops for sweets and rural food industries.

## Local banks raise their capital to face 1997 challenges

AMMAN (Star)—According to instructions by the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) eight banks plan to issue 74,414 million shares in 1997 to raise their paid-up capital from JD 87,586 million to JD 162 million.

Banks with more than JD 15 million shareholders rights have to raise their capital to at least JD 20 million for 1997. The same goes for banks which have less than JD 15 million. They have till the end of this year to comply.

The Bank of Savings and Investment recently increased its capital from JD 11 million to JD 20 million. The capital of the Amman Bank has been restructured by issuing new 15 million shares to increase its capital to JD 20 million instead of JD 5 million.

However, Philadelphia and the Middle East Banks are still moving forward to raise their capital, by issuing new 20 million shares during 1997.

On the other hand, the Business and Jordan National Bank have agreed to merge under the latter name with a paid-up capital of JD 42 million.

These measures are targeted at enhancing the performance of the banking system in Jordan so it would be able to compete with the worldwide economic and banking challenges and developments.

This coincides with Jordan's negotiations to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) which calls for liberalization of services and trade.

Despite the positive effect of raising the banks' capitals, the primary issues market in Jordan, which is unable to cover the new shares offered by companies, is expected to witness greater pressure during this year. The authorized banks will issue about 109,414 million new shares, and this will make the situation worse if the capitalization tax is not cancelled.

Some observers are worried about the market's ability to cover such a huge size of shares, with new companies tending to offer new issues.

The banks plan to capitalize part of their reserves alongside measures to raise their capitals

in order to minimize pressure on the issues market if the government cancels the capitalization tax.

This cancellation is stipulated in the new companies draft law that is awaiting approval of parliament.

However, the rise in the banks' capitals to JD 133,814 million which will be offered for dealings at AFM, will lead to an expansion of the share dealing base. This will certainly result in negative effects on share price levels as they fall because of increase in bids, together with high level of liquidity.

Thus, through co-ordination, the AFM management has to introduce big Arab and foreign investment portfolios to the market and pump more liquidity to absorb any decline in prices.

This requires removing obstacles against foreign investments flows provided that measures to restrict foreigners ownership in Jordanian companies is limited to 50 percent.

## MARKET WATCH 28 - 30 December

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Al-Nizar Al-Anba Insurance</li> <li>Zara Investment</li> <li>Middle East Bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amb Insurance</li> <li>Amb Sea Insurance</li> <li>Amman Cairo Bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JIMCO</li> <li>Central Trade</li> <li>The Housing Bank</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amb Medical Supplies</li> <li>JIMCO</li> <li>Jordan Ceramic Factories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JIMCO</li> <li>National Industry</li> <li>Jordan Trade Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jordan Trade Center</li> <li>Woolen Industry</li> <li>Jordan Mineral Industry</li> </ul>	
5.00 5.00 4.95  3.17 2.94 2.46	5.26 5.00 5.00  6.06 5.48 5.26	6.45 6.00 5.00  5.56 3.97 3.70	

General Price Pointer	151.720	151.64	153.460
Trade Volume	3018217	13813864	2091720
Stock Volume	1051937	2257966	1504825

Highest Traded Stocks: Arab Bank 919,829; Hotels and Tourist 12474070; International Education 438,808

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

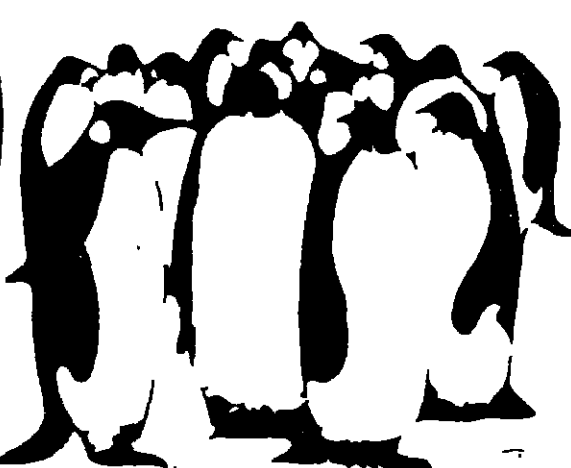
## Foreign Exchange Wednesday, 31 December

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US \$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1708	1.1767
DM	0.4547	0.4570
SFr	0.5318	0.5345
FRF	0.1346	0.1353
YEN (100)	0.6226	0.6257
DEL	0.4054	0.4074
LIT (100)	0.4619	0.4642





## AROUND TOWN



## Miss France '97 poses for the camera

● The winner of Miss France '97 was Patricia Spehar from Paris. She is posing at the hotel Prince de Galles in Paris.



## Art, midway between abstract and representation

By Munther Hamdan  
Star Staff Writer

A multitude of personal and group art exhibitions were held in Amman in 1996. It was an artistic extravaganza. Among the many that hosted what is new in the art world is the Baladna Art Gallery.

The last of a series of exhibitions that took place at Baladna is currently held under the title of *Menatours*. This exhibition, which includes paintings, sculpture, installations and collage works, is becoming a tradition that is held every year.

A large number of "small-sized works" for Jordanian and Arab painters and sculptors are on display. They were meant to be small so that the showroom will accommodate as many works as possible. Many of the artists exhibited their works at other art galleries earlier in the year. Now, at Baladna it is an opportunity for viewers to have a comparative perspective. What is important about this kind of exhibition is that it provides patrons with diversity of styles and themes.

The installation works of Nasser Al Soumi, a Palestinian painter, can best be described as a way to understand nature. It is an attempt to establish relations between nature's different aspects. He uses natural objects like wood, shells, threads etc., to refer symbolically to the forces of nature imposed upon human beings. Al Soumi's creations are divided into many parts, each having a direct bearing on the other. This is best represented through the color congruity.

In the abstract works of the Sudanese painter Issam Abd Al Hafez, colors overlap—boundaries cannot be easily traced. Yet if one tries to delve deep into the painting he will find different structures built on each other to form a unified whole. Similar in a way is the water-color works of another Sudanese painter, Rashed Dyab. His belong to those kinds of portraits which develop into the abstract through a transitional period. This moment of "in between" refers to the state of indecisiveness that the painter undergoes.

On the homefront, artist Abd Al Raouf Sha-



Artists who are participating in Menatours

moon produces images that can be interpreted in two ways. One would say they are abstract works while others would see them as classics displaying natural scenes. However, we can only say that the works of the Jordanian artist lie midway between abstraction and representation. Adding to the two are the works of Jordanian Ghassan Abu Laban, and Hassan Ali Ahmed, a Sudanese. Both have an abstract touch.

As opposed to this style, we have a number of directly representative works. These are the desert scenes of Turki Abd Al Azim, an Iraqi, the trees of Mahmoud Al Nasser, Jordanian, the carriages and dishes of Ibrahim Al Abdali, Iraqi, and the roses and vases of Sana'a Al Masri from Amman.

The geometrical dimension is exploited to the limits in some of the paintings. A good example of that is the paintings of Hani Al Hourani, another local talent. He makes use of Arabic calligraphy. But the Iraqi Salman Abbas, highlights the geometrical lines that are inscribed on a wall. This is slightly different from the external boundaries with disappearing structures that are displayed by Hassan Ali Ahmed, another Sudanese painter.

The Iraqi Ali Al Ebadli's calligraphic works reveal the artist's perception of the strictest rules of this old Arabic art. He excels in writing the Quranic verses.

Other abstract works displayed are those of Jordanian painters like Ghassan Mafadieh.

Ghadah Dahdaleh, Hussein Da'seh, Khairi Hrizallah and Muhammad Abu Zureiq.

While Mafadieh focuses on the visual relation between the different structures of his one-dimensional painting, Dahdaleh and Abu Zureiq try to present another dimension. Hrizallah and Da'seh seek color congruity with the latter using white as a motif in the three works he displayed.

The only two sculptors at the exhibition are the Jordanian Abd Al Hay Musallam and the Syrian Mustafa Ali. Musallam's sculptures feature a woman lying in different postures beside a tree. He wanted to shed light on the symbolic relation between the female and the land by gilding the sculptures with earth colors. Ali, whose exhibition at the Baladna gallery ended recently, participates with some of his small-sized works that express man's yearning for salvation.

In terms of salvation and man's attempt to unravel the mysteries of the world, the Jordanian Marwan Al Afan, through his collage works, seeks to metaphysically get united with the supernatural elements of the universe. Adding to this is Muhammad Nasrallah's symbolic works. They depict the sea, the birds and the straws of a nest as symbols of liberating oneself from the restrictions of earth.

The above mentioned works are now exhibited at Baladna (1) which is the showroom. Baladna (2) is the old room that is turned into an art workshop. Suad Al Isawi, who is also the director of the gallery, has shown some of her glass works here along with the Iraqi sculptor Ali Al Jinabi. Al Isawi's painting on blown glass requires hard work and it can be seen in some way as similar to embroidery. The shapes and proportions need to be made exactly right. The same goes for Al Jinabi's hard metal-like copper sculptures, that require a lot of patience and dexterity.

The exhibition will run till 14 January. ■

## London Fashion Week '97

## A mix of creativity and elegance

SINCE ITS inception, London Fashion Week has become a popular event and a successful art show. World renowned designers gather at the event to provide fashion lovers with the latest in creative design.

About 35 catwalk shows constitute the main part of the event. During the show, parties are held to add more to the prevailing festivity.

The selling exhibition-sites alongside the show tents in the grounds of the Natural History Museum—comprise a slick white village of stands, restaurants and facilities.

About 125 companies participated in the opening of the lead-up to the 1997 Fashion Week. They provided creative accessories and clothes from a new generation of designers.

The Summer/Spring 1997 Fashion Week will be another event of creativity and innovation. It is scheduled to take place between 24-28 February and is expected to offer buyers the variety of designs they are seeking in the world of fashion. This includes hats, bags, jewelry, scarves, shoes, sunglasses, T-shirts, knit wear and great evening clothes.

Among the designers are Stephen Jones with his humming birds and tiny fringed toppers, Diana Lauries with her classy kitsch, bright beads and bon-bon stones. Also there will be Cathryn Avison's delicious petal embroidered organza scarves and matching shift dresses and the evening clothes from the English eccentrics like Jenny Pacham, Favour Brook and Louise Kennedy.

The carefully designed clothes and accessories are aimed at offsetting femininity at its best. They have such features as transparency, embroidered organzas, soft frills, wrap arounds and scoop back views.

About 125 designers are participating in

the week. They see it as a great opportunity to present themselves to the world and keep them in touch with each other.

Adding to the above are buyers who are interested in the show because of the diversity and quality of the products displayed. Michael Ellis-Jones, the managing director of Fenwick LTD, London says that "British designers have managed to achieve the right mix of creativity and commerciality. The quality approach is still there but so is a new professionalism."

Ann Pither, fashion director at Harrods London says that "I feel so excited by this week, fashion seems to be intensifying here. I never want to hear that 'apologetic' London is getting better comment again—this week has shown that in the fullest sense London is the Capital of Europe." ■



## Ceremony in honor of Pakistan's founder



From L-R: Mr Naqvi, Ensour, Ikramullah and Mrs Naqvi

AMMAN (Star)—The Pakistani Embassy held last week at the newly opened Quaid-e-Azam Hall a ceremony on the occasion of the birth of the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The event, which was held in conjunction with the Jordanian-Pakistani Friendship Society, was inaugurated by Begum Shaista Ikramullah, former member of Pakistan's National Assembly and former ambassador to Morocco. Presiding over the function was Minister of Higher Education, Dr Abdallah Ensour.

The Pakistani Ambassador to Amman, Mr Ali Sarwar Naqvi, delivered a speech pointing to the role Jinnah played in establishing his country and in diffusing democratic and Islamic values among people.

Speaking during the event was Mr Raef Najem, head of the Jordanian-Pakistani Friendship Society. He highlighted Pakistan's honorable stand towards the Arabs and Palestinian cause.

Mrs Ikramullah, who is also the mother of HRH Sarvath Al Hassan, said that she was honored to work closely with Jinnah and under his leadership.

The occasion included an exhibition of photos featuring the different stages of Jinnah's life. ■

### AGENDA

**Exhibitions**

- *Menatours* at Baladna Art Gallery, continues till 14 January.
- Mini Bazaar at Um El Kundum. Lithographs, old postcards and photographs on Jerusalem, Chinese paintings, arts and crafts, fresh farm produce, off the Airport highway on the way to the Arabian Horse Club, first left at the top of the hill. Friday 3 January from 11:00 am till 5:00 pm. Tel: 664805.
- Works by Marwan Kasab-Bachi at the Darat Al Funun, continues till 9 January.
- Works by Rula Shukairi at the Darat Al Funun, continues till 4 January.
- Works by Clara Amado at the Spanish Cultural Center, continues till 15 January.
- *From Script to Abstraction* at the The Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, continues till 12 January.

**Films**

- *Coup de Torchon* at the French Cultural Center, 6 January, at 8:30 pm.

## SCRAPBOOK

By Osanta El Sharif

## Dove of peace at the stake



I HAVE decided to come out of my silence and stick out for the poor dove of peace—that lovely white bird who has come to symbolize the essence of peace from time immemorial. My defence for the dove of peace comes after more than five year's experience with the Middle East process. Before the launching of the Madrid peace conference the famous dove was freely fluttering its magnificent wings across the globe giving hope for millions in Africa, East Asia and Central America.

But life changed for this docile bird ever since it was handed the Middle Eastern assignment. It all started well, with the peace symbol being equally shared and revered by political cartoonists on both sides of the fence. Then it began to turn ugly. As the Middle East peace process slipped into the quagmire of violence and counterviolence, the dove of peace, which is actually a pigeon for Arab cartoonists, began to get all sorts of abuse. Political cartoonists began to do terrible things to the dove of peace, shooting it at mid flight, plucking its feathers, crucifying it, boiling it, stuffing it, blowing it up to pieces and so on. No sooner had Arab and Israeli cartoonists begun to torture the symbol of peace, than they were joined by their American and European colleagues. Terrible things were done to the bird and what added insult to injury was that even amateur painters joined the rampage sending in their contributions to newspaper editors who published them without shame or remorse.

How could we do this? How will our children remember the symbol of peace which had survived for centuries? Will they remember the dove as a free white bird holding the olive branch in its beak and circling the skies to bring hope to millions, or will it be the pot with the boiling water, the stake and fire or the crucifix?

Since peace in the region will take some time to materialize I am proposing that we relieve the dove from this tortuous duty and hand the job to another member of the animal kingdom—one that can withstand our abuse and madness. I am imploring animal rights activists to come to my aid in this quest for justice to the dove, which had had enough.

The job can be handed to the hyena, the bull or the mule—although I am against animal abuse in principle—but if we don't find a volunteer, I'm afraid the dove will not take it much longer. The "hyena of peace" can take over the place of the dove as its Middle Eastern representative. Once this is done the dove can be released in a lovely ceremony to fly away from our region and go to places where it is still revered as a symbol of peace and purity.

It will not be an easy term for the hyena—that is if the unfortunate animal accepts the challenge. But one can think of it this way. While the negotiators engage in fruitless pursuit of peace, the cartoonists can go on their business flogging, handcuffing and crucifying the hyena and all the poor animal can do about it is laugh, which is what hyenas usually do, and then we are even! ■

## THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



"I'm leaving you, Frank, because you're a shiftless, low-down, good-for-nothing imbecile... and, might I finally add, you have the head of a chicken."



"Oh, for heaven's sake! Your father left in such a hurry this morning he's lost another antenna."

Concert for  
THE WILFARI  
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On the 18th of Jan  
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Program  
from 28 Dec

ENGLISH PROGRAM  
SATURDAY  
2:00—Holy Quran  
2:05—Adventures of  
and Donald  
2:30—Circus & Nuts  
Work  
3:00—French Program  
4:00—Gilette  
4:30—Chris Crow  
5:00—News Flash  
5:15—The Blue Heavens  
6:00—French Program  
7:30—News Flash  
7:35—Something to  
8:00—Magazine 91  
8:30—Prison  
9:10—Superman  
Clark  
10:00—News at 10  
10:25—Feature Film  
and Preview  
Gordon

SUNDAY  
2:00—Holy Quran  
2:05—Jenny Quest  
2:30—You Bet Your  
3:00—French Program  
4:00—World  
4:30—The Far Side  
5:00—News Flash  
5:02—Our World  
World 100  
5:15—All Our  
(Doc)  
6:00—French Program

CROSSW

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ANALOGOS



### Concert for the sake of Palestinian children

THE WELFARE Association in Amman is holding under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor a musical concert at the Intercontinental Hotel. The concert will take place on 8 January under the title "For The Welfare of Childhood."

The Palestinian pianist Salim Aboud Ashqar will be giving a classical performance. The organizers say that the proceeds of the tickets of the concert will be exploited to finance the projects the Welfare Association conducts for the benefit of the Palestinian child.

On the 16th of this month, another concert will be held in Dubai under the slogan "For

the Palestinian Child." The concert will be under the patronage of Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Al Maktoum, Emir of Dubai and minister of defence of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The activities to take place will be focusing on projects executed for the sake of the Palestinian child.

The welfare Association, which held similar events in Abu Dhabi last year supporting Jerusalem and studying aspects of development in Palestine in cooperation with the Arab League, has executed for the past 13 years more than 1,200 projects inside Palestine. All these projects were aimed at helping Palestinians stay on their land.

### Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): Daylight
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): First Knight
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): The Hunchback of Notre Dame
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): Ransom
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): The Fan
- Dumb and Dumber

### Highlight of the week at the Pleasure Dome



● Matilda is an extraordinary girl with deeply stupid parents. The little girl stars in the hilarious comedy, "Matilda"

### The Star's GUIDE

Programs on JTV from 28 December—3 January

#### ENGLISH PROGRAMS

##### SATURDAY

- 2:00—Holy Koran
- 2:05—Adventures of Mickey and Donald
- 2:30—Circus & Safety at Work
- 3:00—French Programs
- 4:00—Gillette (Sports)
- 4:30—Chris Cross
- 5:00—News Flash
- 5:15—The Blue Heelers
- 6:00—French Programs
- 7:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Something Wilder
- 8:00—Magazine 01
- 8:30—Prism
- 9:10—Superman-Lots and Clark
- 10:00—News at Ten
- 10:25—Feature Film: *Pride and Prejudice*, starring Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier

##### SUNDAY

- 2:00—Holy Koran
- 2:05—Jonny Quest (Cartoon)
- 2:30—You Bet Your Life
- 3:00—French Programs
- 4:00—World Echo (Doc)
- 4:30—The Famous Five
- 5:00—News Flash
- 5:02—Our World, Their World (Doc)
- 5:15—All Our Children (Doc)
- 6:00—French Programs

##### MONDAY

- 2:00—Holy Koran
- 2:05—The Muppet Show
- 2:30—Dad's Army
- 3:00—French Programs
- 4:00—Nature's Inventions (Doc)
- 4:30—Hey Dad
- 5:00—News Flash
- 5:02—Documentary
- 5:15—Dalton (Drama)
- 6:00—French Programs
- 7:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Rosanne
- 8:00—Global Gardener (Doc)
- 8:30—Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
- 9:10—The Lazarus Man
- 10:00—News at Ten
- 10:25—Under Suspicion
- 11:15—Sisters

##### TUESDAY

- 2:00—Holy Koran
- 2:05—Budgie (Cartoon)
- 2:30—Captain Planet
- 2:40—I Love Lucy
- 3:00—French Programs

- 4:30—Dog House
- 5:00—News Flash
- 5:02—Fun with Physics
- 5:15—Cyclone Tracy
- 6:00—French Programs
- 7:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Murphy Brown
- 8:00—Superstars of Action
- 8:30—Encounter
- 9:10—The Lost Civilizations (Doc)
- 10:00—News at Ten
- 10:25—Snowy River
- 11:30—Mission Impossible

##### WEDNESDAY

- 2:00—Holy Koran
- 2:05—The Muppet Show
- 2:30—Circus
- 4:00—Earth Revealed (Doc)
- 4:30—Escape from Jupiter (Science Fiction)
- 5:00—News Flash
- 5:02—Kelly & Challenge (Doc)
- 6:00—French Programs
- 7:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Baker'sfield P.D. (Comedy)
- 8:15—Challenges
- 9:10—NBA: Basketball Games
- 10:00—News at Ten
- 10:25—Cobra (New Series)
- 11:30—Hart To Hart
- 12:00—Who's The Boss

##### THURSDAY

- 2:00—Holy Koran
- 2:05—Iris & Ovide and the Gang
- 2:30—Out of this World
- 3:00—Covington Cross
- 3:30—Feature Film: *Parent-hood*, starring Ed Begley and Jayne Atkinson
- 5:00—News Flash



Flintstones, Friday at 2:30 pm

- 5:30—French Programs
- 7:30—News Headlines
- 7:35—Down to Earth
- 8:00—Discover Magazine (Doc)
- 8:30—V.R.S., The Virtual Reality
- 9:10—Hunter
- 10:00—News at Ten
- 10:25—Feature Film: *Illusions*, starring Karin Valentin and Ben Masters
- 12:30—Family Matters

##### PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

- 3:00—Dessins animés
- 3:30—Emission jeunesse
- 4:00—Fête des bêtes
- 4:30—Série policière Jack
- 7:00—Le journal
- 7:15—Magazine Ziva

##### DIMANCHE

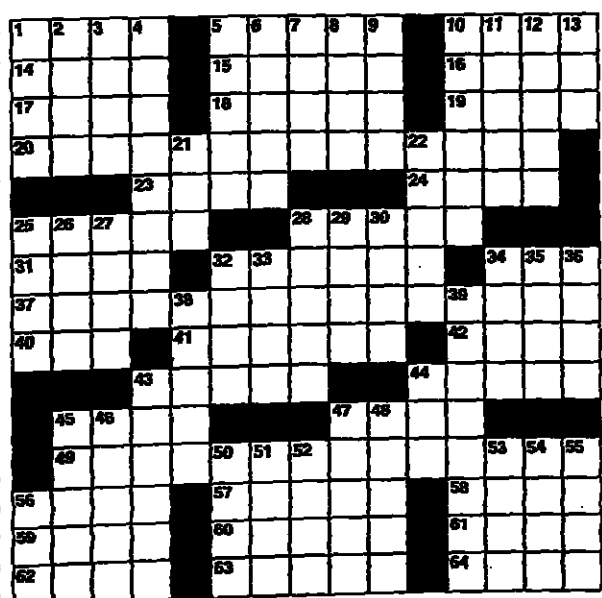
- 3:00—Dessins animés
- 3:30—Documentaire La France aux 1000 villages
- 4:00—Magazine
- 4:30—Faut pas rêver
- 7:00—Le journal
- 7:15—Magazine

##### LUNDI

- 3:00—Dessins animés
- 3:30—Magazine Montagne
- 4:00—Femmes de guide
- 4:30—Documentaire Les tourtereaux du Niger
- 7:00—Le journal
- 7:15—Magazine

Programs are subject to change by JTV

### CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- ACROSS
- 1 The two
  - 5 Valuable
  - 10 Lyle
  - 14 Length
  - 15 Seraglio's
  - 16 Director
  - 17 Close by
  - 18 Varnish
  - 19 Impasse
  - 20 Haba-
  - 23 Futh
  - 24 Greek peak
  - 25 Grinding
  - 26 Diagonal
  - 31 Malware
  - 32 Pacific island
  - 34 Mao—lung
- DOWN
- 2 Court bench
  - 3 Cookle
  - 4 Saviour
  - 6 Fish basket
  - 7 Unkilled
  - 8 Begone
  - 9 Sempiternous
  - 11 Singers
  - 12 Ranch rope
  - 13 Clichés
  - 14 Saviour
  - 15 Pick-me-up
  - 16 Three Blind
  - 17 Small
  - 18 Whistle
  - 20 Depart
  - 21 Allocated
  - 22 Haruspex
  - 23 Power, as an excuse
  - 24 Crackles
  - 25 Baseball
  - 26 Have a connection
  - 27 Anno—
  - 28 Fish basket
  - 29 Unkilled
  - 30 Begone
  - 31 Sempiternous
  - 32 Forest unit
  - 33 Competent
  - 34 Use a stopwatch
  - 35 Break
  - 36 Bridge position
  - 37 Pointer
  - 38 Attraction
  - 39 Large set
  - 40 Anger
  - 41 Look ready
  - 42 Door part
  - 43 Kitchen appliance
  - 44 Change
  - 45 Incline
  - 46 Thought
  - 47 Thailand, once
  - 48 Waste allowance
  - 49 Aloop
  - 50 Hammer head
  - 51 Stop

### —THIS WEEK'S— HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: The theme is learning by doing. Expect to make mistakes.

Aries (March 21-April 19). Pay attention to what you're doing. Details matter. Partnership's the key. Help a creative friend make a decision.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Make solid plans for the new year with your sweetheart. Catch up on your correspondence.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Confusion reigns at home. Don't just throw money at the problem. Love blossoms, but you'll soon have to get back to work.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Neighbors spar you to take action. Fix up your place with the help of another hard worker. You may want to entertain a very important guest.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Focus on money so there'll be enough to last. You might even feel inspired to make up a budget for the year. Stick close to home.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Your instincts are right on target. Expect setbacks and be prepared to deal with them. Hit the sales and you'll find some real steals.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Take care of old business. You'll be brimming over with new ideas soon. Expect complications to develop.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your friends may drag you off to do wild and crazy things. Let them—if it's for a good cause. Finish up old paperwork.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Everything's got to be perfect. You're the life of the party. You may remember a few things you were supposed to have done by now.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). This is a perfect time for travel, higher education and falling in love with foreigners. You may meet somebody who rattles your brain.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Past due obligations threaten to wipe out your savings. Comply with regulations and you could qualify for a loan or grant.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). You'll be in party mode! Let a more organized person help you straighten out your life. These days could be expensive.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: Reach for the far horizon. Try something so outside your old routine that it gives you goose bumps to think about it.

### Bridge

Play Or Defend?  
By Omar Sharif and Tannah Hirsch

East-West vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH

▲ K 10 9 6 5 4

♥ K

♦ K J 10 5

♣ K 7

WEST

▲ A J 8 7 3 2

♥ 8 2

♦ 9 6

♣ Q 6 5

SOUTH

▲ Void

♥ A Q J 10 9 5 3

♦ Q

♣ 10 9 8 3 2

The bidding:

South West North East

4 ♣ Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Ace of ♠

Study the diagram above. Would you rather declare or defend four hearts after the lead of the ace of spades?

Note that South has a four-heart opening bid at any vulnerability. The heart suit is a near-certainty to produce six tricks and the five-card side suit should be counted as two tricks.

East-West should consider themselves lucky. With a slightly different distribution of their assets, West might have ventured four spades with dire consequences.

Suppose you elect to declare, ruff the opening lead and play the queen of diamonds. East wins the ace and exits with a trump, and you will eventually have to concede three club tricks unless the defenders err.

However, that does not mean that you should choose to defend. You can improve on declarer's line.

Ruff the opening lead, cross to the king of hearts and lead the king of spades, intending to discard the queen of diamonds. When East ruffs, overruff and draw the outstanding trumps. Now lead the queen of diamonds. If East allows it to hold, you play on clubs and lose only three tricks in that suit. If East wins, the defender is trapped in an endplay and must give you access to dummy's diamonds no matter what.

Even prettier is to ruff the opening lead and draw trumps, then exit with the queen of diamonds. East is caught in the same pickle as before.

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### Jumble

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LIVAI

GOMAD

BREPUS

TIVEHR



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

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### Words of Wisdom

Genius can be found in making good use of the moment.

Originality is simply a matter of letting your own talents shine rather than taking a back seat to others.

It is better to do and not promise than to promise and not do.

There's nothing wrong with getting older in body as long as you try to get younger in mind.

Nothing baffles the devils like straightforward integrity.

One person's failure is another person's success.

### TRUE! By Daryl Cagle



Naturalist author Henry David Thoreau lived in solitary harmony with nature at his Walden Pond cabin, which was 500 yards from the railroad tracks connecting Boston and Fitchburg, Ma.

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Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

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# Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

## La Jordanie au fil des mois

A l'occasion de la nouvelle année, le Jourdain propose une rétrospective de l'année 1996 avec une sélection de douze événements qui ont fait l'actualité du royaume hachémite sur le plan national et international.

### Janvier

#### Le roi Hussein à Tel-Aviv

Le 10 janvier, le roi Hussein effectuait son premier voyage officiel à Tel-Aviv.

Ce voyage suivait de quelques semaines sa première visite officielle en Israël, à l'occasion des funérailles de Yitzhak Rabin.

Accueilli à l'aéroport de Tel-Aviv par le rabbin Meir Lau (cf photo), le roi Hussein a remis aux côtés de Shimon Peres un prix aux chefs des délégations de paix des deux pays, l'Israélien Elyakim Rubinstein et le Jordanien Fayez Tawaneh, lors d'une cérémonie qui s'est déroulée à Beit Gavnol, près du lac de Tibériade.



### Avril

#### Un avion pour Israël

La Jordanie et Israël ont inauguré le 7 avril la première liaison régulière aérienne entre Amman et Tel-Aviv avec l'atterrissage d'un appareil civil jordanien sur l'aéroport Ben Gourion.

Ce premier vol s'inscrit dans le processus de normalisation entre les deux pays. La compagnie aérienne jordanienne Royal Wings est chargée d'assurer cinq vols hebdomadaires entre les deux villes.

Deux jours avant ce vol inaugural officiel, un avion israélien s'était déjà posé à Amman. Un 747 de la compagnie El Al avait en effet été détourné de Tel-Aviv en raison des mauvaises conditions météorologiques.

### Mai

#### Cinquante années d'indépendance

Le royaume hachémite de Jordanie a célébré le 25 mai un demi-siècle d'indépendance.

C'est le 25 mars 1946 que la Transjordanie a été reconnue comme un Etat indépendant avec pour souverain son atterrisseur le prince Abdallah (cf photo). Deux mois plus tard, le 25 mai, le Conseil législatif prêtait serment à «sa majesté le roi du Royaume de Jordanie».

Après l'assassinat du roi Abdallah en 1951 à la mosquée Al Aqsa de Jérusalem, son fils Talal accède au trône.

Il devra céder le pouvoir deux années plus tard à son fils Hussein alors âgé de 17 ans pour des raisons de santé.



### Février

#### La révolution blanche

Le 4 février, le roi Hussein choisissait de nommer un nouveau Premier ministre, Abdel Karim Kabariti. Il charge cet homme de 46 ans, ministre des Affaires étrangères dans le gouvernement précédent de Zeid Ben Chaker, de procéder à une révolution blanche dans le pays.

«J'ai souhaité un gouvernement jeune, solidaire, qui consacre tous ses moyens et son énergie à changer radicalement les structures et dirigeants de l'Etat», explique le roi Hussein dans la lettre de désignation de M. Kabariti.

Ce gouvernement de 31 membres comprend 22 députés. Une présence parlementaire massive au sein du pouvoir exécutif qui traduit la volonté de resserrer les liens entre les deux pouvoirs.

Les priorités fixées à ce gouvernement concernent l'économie jordanienne, toujours en attente des dividendes de la paix. Sur le plan extérieur, Abdel Karim Kabariti, qui occupe les fonctions de ministre des Affaires étrangères et de la Défense, a pour mission d'améliorer les relations avec les pays du Golfe qui boudent la Jordanie depuis la guerre du Golfe à cause de son attitude jugée favorable à l'Irak.

Sur le plan de la politique intérieure, le nouveau Premier ministre s'est engagé à respecter les orientations démocratiques du régime, promettant notamment de respecter la liberté d'expression et d'opinion des citoyens jordanien.

### Mars

#### Trois ans de prison pour Schbeilat

Le chef du syndicat des ingénieurs jordanien, Leith Schbeilat est condamné le 17 mars à trois ans de prison pour crime de lèse-majesté. Une peine qui sera amnistie au bout de huit mois.

Islamiste indépendant hostile au processus de paix, Leith Schbeilat a été arrêté en décembre 1995 pour avoir publiquement critiqué sa majesté le roi Hussein pour sa participation à Jérusalem aux obsèques de Yitzhak Rabin. Refusant le processus de paix avec Israël, Leith Schbeilat est en Jordanie une des grandes figures de l'opposition. Maintenu en détention, il a été réélu à la tête du plus puissant syndicat professionnel, celui des ingénieurs, qui compte 30.000 membres.

Ancien député entre 1989 et 1993, Leith Schbeilat avait déjà connu la prison. Il avait été condamné en 1992 à 20 ans de prison pour appartenance à une organisation illégale et complot contre le régime. Il avait alors bénéficié la même année d'une amnistie générale décrétée par le roi.

Une grâce royale qui lui a à nouveau été accordée cette année, à l'occasion de l'anniversaire du roi le 14 novembre 1996. C'est d'ailleurs le roi lui-même qui l'attendait à sa sortie de prison pour le raccompagner en voiture chez sa mère. (cf photo)



### Juin

#### Des liens resserrés avec la Syrie

La rencontre au Caire le 22 juin entre le roi Hussein et Hafez el Assad a marqué un tournant dans les relations jordan-syriennes. Celle-ci s'est déroulée en marge du sommet réunissant 21 pays arabes au Caire les 20 et 21 juin pour définir une position commune après la victoire fin mai de Benjamin Netanyahu aux élections générales israéliennes.

Depuis le mois de mai 1994, les deux hommes ne s'étaient pas rencontrés. Hafez el Assad s'opposant au processus de paix avec Israël. Les relations s'étaient encore refroidies avec les accusations portées au début du mois par le roi Hussein contre la Syrie concernant l'infiltration en Jordanie d'organisations palestiniennes radicales basées à Damas tentant de déstabiliser la Jordanie en y introduisant des explosifs pour commettre des attentats contre des Jordaniens et des touristes israéliens. Rejetant ces accusations, le président Hafez el Assad s'est tout de même engagé à enquêter sur ces commandos et à informer les autorités jordanien.

Plus que les résultats immédiats de cette rencontre, la volonté de renouer un dialogue constructif affichée par les deux pays traduit un réel changement dans leurs relations. Quelques jours après le sommet, les deux dirigeants s'entretenaient d'ailleurs au téléphone de la situation régionale et de l'avenir du processus de paix.

### Juillet

#### Jérash fête ses 15 ans

Pour la quinzième année consécutive, le site gréco-romain de Jérash a accueilli un festival culturel rassemblant des artistes représentant l'ensemble du monde arabe. Deux semaines de spectacles qui ont attiré des dizaines de milliers de spectateurs.



### Septembre

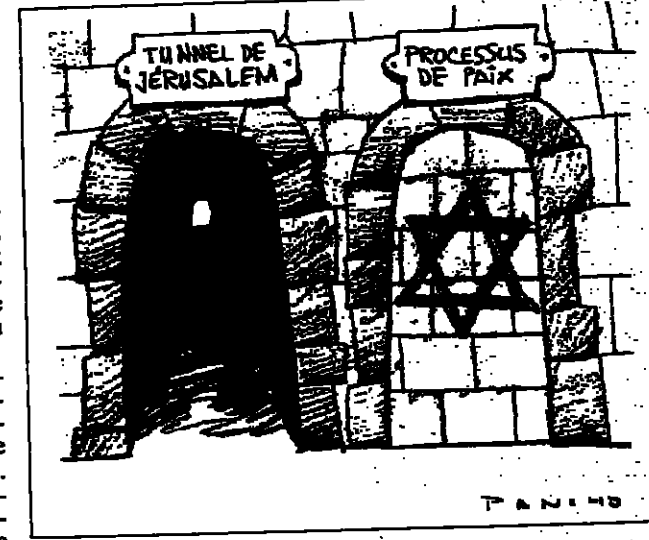
#### Un «rôle spécial» à Jérusalem

Les territoires palestiniens ont connu les 26 et 27 septembre les émeutes les plus meurtrières depuis 1967. Plus de 80 personnes sont mortes au cours d'affrontements entre policiers israéliens et Palestiniens.

Le déclencheur de ces violentes émeutes a été l'annonce par Israël du percement d'un nouvel accès au tunnel longeant l'Esplanade des mosquées de Jérusalem qui abrite notamment le Dôme du rocher, troisième lieu saint de l'Islam.

Pour les Palestiniens, le percement de ce tunnel est une provocation qui s'inscrit dans la politique israélienne visant à nier le caractère arabe de Jérusalem. Car sous l'Esplanade des Mosquées se trouveraient les vestiges de temples juifs datant de l'ère biblique. Des vestiges qui permettraient aux Israéliens d'affirmer leur antériorité dans cette ville.

Qualifiant le percement de ce nouvel accès de «provocation contre le sentiment des Arabes et des musulmans», le roi Hussein a rappelé que le «rôle spécial de la Jordanie dans la gestion des lieux saints de Jérusalem». Ce rôle historique a en effet été confirmé par les accords de paix israélo-jordanien d'octobre 1994.



## SELON MOI

L'année 1996 s'éclipse de nos mémoires sans aucun regret. Jamais en cinquante années d'existence les Jordaniens n'ont connu une année si cafardeuse et si oppressante. Une année de plus vers l'an 2000 qui n'aura malheureusement rien appris aux Jordaniens, toujours avides de conquérir le 21ème siècle avec une mentalité du 19ème.

1996, année de toutes les déceptions. L'ami irréprochable qu'on nous a imposé s'est révélé infidèle, déloyal et scélérat. De plus, nous nous sommes soudainement réveillés au bout de seize mois d'amnésie pour découvrir que les enfants irakiens qui mouraient à quelques pas de chez nous étaient nos frères.

1996 s'est achevée sans que rien n'ait été entrepris pour atténuer la folie des grandeurs qui nous ravage alors que nous ne sommes pas capables d'apprendre la discipline ou de conduire nos voitures comme des êtres civilisés.

Les médias officiels sont devenus en 1996 plus ennuyeux et plus écorchés que jamais. Les spécialistes des louanges qui se moquent éperdument de la Jordanie ont le champ libre alors que la censure contre un vrai patriote comme l'éditorialiste Tarek Masarweh continue de s'exercer. Elle ne cessera que lorsque l'on parviendra à extraire la Jordanie de son cœur.

L'érotisme de vision et l'immaturité continuent de guider nos pensées. Comment expliquer que l'on ait pu décréter le jour de Noël scolaire cette année alors que cette même journée avait été choisie voilà trois ans comme date de début des épreuves du baccalauréat? Comment un esprit moyen peut comprendre que l'on décide de commencer des travaux de canalisation et crever le bitume pour creuser des tranchées quinze jours après avoir terminé la réfection d'une route? Et comment justifier que nos universités continuent de délivrer chaque année des diplômés à 1000 nouveaux ingénieurs chômeurs alors que ce pays compte déjà un ingénieur pour 113 habitants?

De nouveaux postiches incarnant de fausses valeurs ont été rafistolés en 1996. Mais les amoureux, les fidèles, les gens dévoués ayant le sens du sacrifice pour leur patrie ne manquent pas. Et ils savent qu'il faudra redoubler de vigilance pour l'année à venir car l'ennemi véreux s'immisce dans notre société, ne cessant de vociférer sans honte sa volonté de l'anéantir.

Le Jordanien nerveux, insatisfait et toujours pressé est aujourd'hui méconnaissable. Celui qui ne supportait pas d'attendre deux secondes lorsque le feu de circulation passait au vert est désormais prêt à attendre trois heures pour se faire servir un hamburger. Merci à Monsieur Mac Donald pour nous avoir apporté l'éluxir de la patience, l'unction de l'indulgence, et pour nous avoir aidé à découvrir que la régulation de notre équilibre mental se faisait à partir de notre estomac.

Enfin, 1996 peut être qualifiée d'année de l'intolérance: des stades de football aux rangs des universités, les fractures se multiplient et les haines augmentent dans les cœurs et les cerveaux de la population. Le parlement est devenu un ring de catch et un théâtre d'injures, certains esprits rétrécis continuant de confondre démagogie et démocratie.

Adieu donc 1996. Aie la gentillesse de ne pas informer ta sœur cadette 1997 de notre malheur et de nos espoirs qui se volatilisent. Laisse-nous, s'il te plaît, rêver que cette nouvelle année nous apportera le remède miracle qui nous aidera à sortir de cette ténébreuse abîme et à fuir ainsi ce cruel destin qui s'acharne sur nous. ■

Sonhail Al Sweis

La rédaction du Jourdain présente ses meilleurs vœux à ses lecteurs pour l'année 1997.

### Août

#### Des émeutes secouent la Jordanie

Le sud de la Jordanie a connu les 16 et 17 août de violentes émeutes, notamment dans les villes de Kérak (cf photo) et Ma'an.

Pendant deux journées des centaines de manifestants ont défié les forces de l'ordre, brûlant de nombreux bâtiments publics. L'origine de ces troubles tient à une décision gouvernementale intervenue quelques semaines plus tôt: celle d'augmenter le prix du pain de 250%.

Cette décision, vivement contestée par plus d'un tiers du Parlement, s'inscrit dans la politique d'ajustements structurels suivie par la Jordanie pour répondre aux critères imposés par le Fonds monétaire international. Afin de réduire son déficit budgétaire, la Jordanie a en effet choisi de réduire certaines de ses dépenses, et notamment les subventions accordées à un certain nombre de produits alimentaires. Au lendemain de ces émeutes, le roi Hussein a accusé des partis politiques liés à l'étranger d'avoir organisé ces troubles, et notamment l'Irak qui a vu plusieurs de ses diplomates en poste obligés de quitter la Jordanie.



### Octobre

#### Chirac passe par Amman

Depuis quatre ans, la Jordanie n'avait pas reçu la visite d'un président français. A l'occasion de sa tournée au Proche-Orient l'amenant successivement en Syrie, en Israël, dans les territoires palestiniens, en Jordanie, au Liban puis en Egypte, Jacques Chirac a effectué sa première visite officielle en Jordanie. Un séjour de 24 heures au cours duquel il s'est entretenu à plusieurs reprises avec le roi Hussein du processus de paix dans la région.

Il a profité de cette étape pour délivrer un discours devant le Parlement jordanien sur les rapports entre l'Occident et l'Islam, prêchant la tolérance entre les religions et les peuples. Pour lui, la Jordanie est justement un exemple de tolérance où minarets et clochers ont appris à vivre ensemble.



### Novembre

#### Weizman rencontre le roi Hussein

Le président israélien Ezer Weizman s'est rendu le 6 novembre à Amman pour rencontrer le roi Hussein.

Cette première visite officielle du chef de l'Etat israélien est intervenue quelques semaines seulement après que le président israélien ait reçu Yasser Arafat dans sa résidence privée de Césaire.

A l'occasion de sa visite jordanienne, Ezer Weizman a déclaré qu'il restait confiant quant à l'avenir du processus de paix, regrettant toutefois certaines lenteurs ou rigidités à propos de la question d'Hébron. «J'appelle Abou Ammar à tenter de faire bouger les choses. Je sais qu'il a certaines opinions, mais je crois que cette question sera résolue plus rapidement si on y met un peu plus de bonne volonté».

Le roi Hussein a lui salué les prises de position du président israélien qui visent à aider la consolidation de la paix entre Israël et la Jordanie afin de préparer «un futur meilleur pour les deux peuples».

#### C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

#### Cinéma

Début du cycle consacré à l'acteur Philippe Noiret. Coup de torchon, le 6 janvier à 20h30 au Centre culturel français.

### Décembre

#### Les relations avec l'Irak se réchauffent

La visite à Amman le 6 décembre du chef de la diplomatie irakienne, Mohammed Saïd al-Sahaf, témoigne d'un réchauffement des relations entre la Jordanie et l'Irak après une année particulièrement tendue.

Cette rencontre a eu lieu quelques heures seulement après l'annonce par l'Irak de la reprise de ses exportations de pétrole en vertu de la résolution 986 de l'Onu dite «pétrole contre nourriture» qui autorise Bagdad à vendre pour une valeur de deux milliards de dollars de pétrole chaque semestre pour financer des achats de vivres et de médicaments.

L'importation de ces produits à destination de l'Irak devrait se faire à partir du port d'Aqaba, comme c'était le cas pour la plupart des importations irakiennes avant le début de l'embargo international décrété après la guerre du Golfe.

Les échanges n'ont cependant jamais réellement cessé entre les deux pays, la Jordanie étant autorisée par l'Onu depuis août 1990 à importer 70.000 barils de pétrole par jour. Cette dérogation à l'embargo avait été décidée afin de permettre à l'Irak de rembourser sa dette auprès de la Jordanie. Début 1996, la Jordanie avait d'ailleurs décidé de réduire le montant du protocole financier avec Bagdad de 400 à 220 millions de dollars. Elle avait justifié cette décision par l'accumulation de la dette irakienne qui a atteint 1,2 milliard de dollars.

Depuis la guerre du Golfe et le soutien de la Jordanie à l'Irak, les relations se sont nettement dégradées entre les deux pays.

Celles-ci avaient notamment été affectées par la défection du Jordanien en août 1995 de deux gendres du président irakien Saddam Hussein, qui ont été assassinés lors de leur retour volontaire à Bagdad six mois plus tard.

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